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Juana Alicia: a Case Study of the Artist as Critical Muralist

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JUANA ALICIA:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ARTIST AS CRITICAL MURALIST

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ABSTRACT

JUANA ALICIA:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ARTIST AS CRITICAL MURALIST

Much has been written on Mexican Muralism and on the resurgence of mural art in the United States, and Chicana/o murals in San Francisco in particular, but very little has been written about mural artist Juana Alicia specifically, and none of this material has been gathered into one document. This study focuses on Juana Alicia as an important community-educator-artist-leader-activist, what educator and mural artist Arturo Rosette defines in his doctoral dissertation as a "critical muralist."[1] In particular, this study analyzes Juana Alicia's 2012 mural, *The Spiral Word*, and places it within the context of mural art that functions as activist art, especially as it pertains to education, i.e. critical muralism. This study argues that many of Juana Alicia's murals function as means of critical pedagogy, and that the complex densely packed narrative structure of *The Spiral Word* is particularly effective in this regard. By researching the literary and other source material for each image in *The Spiral Word*, this study concludes that decoding the complex iconography is a successful method of critical consciousness-raising.

[1] Arturo Rosette, *"Critical Muralism."* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2009).

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This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Ann Wilkinson Connor, who encouraged my love of art from a very early age, gave me my moral compass, and was an exemplary role model as a mother, educator, writer, and activist for peace and social justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PLATES

JUANA ALICIA:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ARTIST AS A CRITICAL MURALIST

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to add to the body of literature on contemporary murals, rooted in the Mexican mural tradition, as activist art. Although much has been written on Mexican Muralism and on the resurgence of mural art in the United States, and Chicana/o murals in San Francisco in particular, very little has been written about mural artist Juana Alicia specifically, and none of this material has been gathered into one document. This study focuses on Juana Alicia as an important community-educator-artist-leader-activist, what educator and mural artist Arturo Rosette defines in his doctoral dissertation as a "critical muralist,"[2] and what Suzanne Lacy defines as a practitioner of new genre public art.[3] In particular I analyze Juana Alicia's 2012 mural, *The Spiral Word*, and place it within the context of mural art that functions as activist art, especially as it pertains to education, i. e. critical muralism.

In defining what a mural is Leonard Folgarit says of the early twentieth century Mexican murals "they were made to make a difference to their viewers beyond the

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[2] Arturo Rosette, "Critical Muralism." (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2009).

[3] "New genre public art – visual art that uses both traditional and nontraditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives – is based on engagement." Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 12.

aesthetic dimension" and that "The murals produce the viewer as a consumer of the painted image and its meanings, meanings that the mural (and the premises of its commission) *implies the viewer needs*."[4] (My emphasis.) The critical muralist's *intent*, in other words, is not only didactic but it aims to inspire critical consciousness, a term developed by Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire and defined as the result of achieving a deep understanding of the world as he says, by "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[5]

Juana Alicia's complex, content-driven mural, *The Spiral Word*, exemplifies this intent. However, *The Spiral Word* is a crowded composition, composed of many small but clearly meaningful individual elements. The question is: can a mural that is as narratively dense and iconographically rich as the *Spiral Word* be easily decoded and understood by a viewer not familiar with its imagery? I believe the answer to this question is no. My thesis will show that in order to fully comprehend the content-driven complexity of *The Spiral Word,* the engaged viewer must educate her or himself beyond the visual and textual information that is given at the mural site. I will show that Juana Alicia's murals, especially *The Spiral Word*, use content-driven didactic forms to carry their manifold and critical messages to educate and instill cultural pride, and argue that the very complexity of the subject matter makes Juana Alicia's *The Spiral Word* an effective means of critical consciousness-raising.

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[4] Leonard Folgarit, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920 – 1940 Art of the New Order* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 29.

[5] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1970), 17.

Chapter One describes the physical and cultural context of Juana Alicia's mural, *The Spiral Word,* in El Centro Chicano at Stanford University, and provides a first reading, or visual analysis of the mural. The iconography of the mural is then further explored in a second reading, based on a narrative text the artist has provided at the site of the mural.

Chapter Two explores Juana Alicia's context, especially as it relates to Chicano mural tradition. The artist's biography is linked to the Chicano political and mural movements of the 1960s and 1970s in San Francisco's Mission District, and the historical context of mural making in San Francisco is discussed, in particular the impact of Diego Rivera on late twentieth century Chicano mural artists.

Chapter Three describes Juana Alicia's art as a reflection of her identity as a critical muralist. Juana Alicia's murals, especially her most recent work, use content-driven didactic forms to carry their complex and critical messages. Activist art is defined and murals as a particularly democratic form of activist art are explored, along with the idea of critical muralism and critical pedagogy as a means of helping students achieve critical consciousness. As Rachel Joy Tancioco Estrella writes "One of the primary goals of critical pedagogy is the empowerment of people on the margins through reclamation of voice. The path to reclamation of voice involves a critical reading and understanding of the world, and the ability to uncover forgotten or erased histories and reclaim one's past is a key aspect of critical pedagogy."[6] Several of Juana Alicia's murals are discussed in relation to their roles as a means of delivering a critical pedagogy.

Chapter Four is a third decoding of Juana Alicia's *Spiral Word*, digging deeply into

[6] Rachel Joy Tancioco Estrella, *Lessons From the Wall: Muralism and the Art of Empowerment* (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007).

this mural's iconology to reveal that it functions as a work of art that aims to educate, reclaim history, and inspire with messages of pride and hope, all ingredients essential to critical consciousness and activist art. In Chapter Four, I argue that this deeper investigation of the subtext of *The Spiral Word*, consisting of a literal reading of the literary source material, makes *The Spiral Word* such an effective tool for the all-important role of education in activism; if the viewer is actively engaged in decoding the images of this inherently didactic mural, investigating the source material provides a semester's worth of education. In particular, the "codex" section has parallels to Freire's "generative themes" in which images are used to instigate dialogue and raise critical consciousness.[7] The education one receives from this deeper reading of *The Spiral Word* lies at the heart of what makes it activist art – one cannot work to change problems one does not know about, or hold people down who have reclaimed cultural pride. Chapter Four argues this idea by linking images within the mural to their source material, with particular emphasis on the writings of Eduardo Galeano, demonstrating that Juana Alicia's *The Spiral Word*, in large part because of its very complexity, is an effective means of inspiring critical consciousness.

I conducted two extensive interviews with Juana Alicia at her home in Berkeley, Ca. on May 29, 2013 and June 18, 2013. The transcript of these interviews can be found in Appendix A. In the body of my thesis, the citation of this interview will be abbreviated as JA/AC.

[7] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 95.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Walking through the enormous campus of Stanford University, across manicured lawns and past the imposing architecture of academia, there can be little doubt it is a place not just of learning, but also of privilege and power. It is somewhat surprising then to find Malaquias Montoyas's 1982 mural *Education* stretching out along the front of the building on Lausen Mall that houses El Centro Chicano, Stanford's Chicano/Latino student center. Painted on seven plywood panels, from left to right the mural depicts images of conquest, a *huelga* eagle, *braceros* in a field against a red sun on the horizon, workers marching out of the field with books in their hands towards the large faces of male and female workers holding the handles of gears in their gloved hands at the center of the mural. From the right, more workers carry books, a beaker and a compass are superimposed on a sun surrounded by fire that emerges from the hand of another large figure. Under the outstretched arm are people who appear to be singing or protesting, against a red banner that wraps around an image of Stanford's iconic Hoover Tower and which contains the unfinished words "El Centro Chicano." Decidedly low-tech and colorful, the mural is a startling reminder in a sleek and elite world of the past struggles of a disenfranchised population, and its simple and bold graphics project a clear message to all who pass beneath it into the Centro Chicano - the value of education to uplift a people.

Inside El Centro Chicano, Juana Alicia's sophisticated, contemporary mural *The Spiral Word* is much more complex and nuanced, but it projects a message that is just as

strong as Montoya's. In this thesis, I analyze Juana Alicia's mural and place it within the context of mural art that functions as activist art, especially as it pertains to education, i.e. critical muralism, thereby illustrating that didactic, community-based, content-driven murals are an important means of activist art as critical pedagogy.

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF EL CENTRO CHICANO: PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF *THE SPIRAL WORD*

El Centro Chicano opened in 1978 under the auspices of Stanford University's Student Affairs. The mission of the student center is to

> support students academically, personally, socially, and culturally. We focus on creating mature, aware and socially responsible individuals who advocate and dialogue for equity and social justice.
>
> Within the Chicano and Latino community there is a great diversity of backgrounds, aspirations, and sociopolitical views that adds to the richness of our collective experience. El Centro's programs provide Stanford students the opportunity to explore Chicano and Latino culture, history, and traditions.[8]

In the lobby of the center, the visitor is greeted by Juana Alicia's three-part mural; the striking image of a bare-chested young woman sitting cross-legged on a tree stump that seemingly grows from the floor is the first sight that greets the visitor as she walks through the door. (Plate 1.) At the end of a buttery beige hallway, a stairway leading up to the left is faced with a short wall, the top of which serves as a bannister. The wall is painted a brilliant scarlet against which the sepia tones of the woman's body stand out. (Plate 2.)

[8] "About," Stanford: El Centro Chicano y Latino, Student Affairs, accessed March 19, 2014, https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/elcentro.

Plate 1. Hallway at El Centro Chicano, showing the layout of ***The Spiral Word***, © 2012, by Juana Alicia. Photo by permission of the artist.

Plate 2. ***Mayan Scribe,*** 2012. Digital print and acrylic on canvas, 45" X 65".

The scribe's face is in profile looking to the right, and she is holding a conch shell on her right knee from which an ethereal orange stream flows across the flat surface of the

stump and onto the ground. In her left hand, she holds a stylus with which she is writing on accordion pleated paper unfolding as it rises up beside her. A cloth is draped around her hips, but she is otherwise nude, and swirling ochre, bronze and brown designs cover her skin, stopping at her neckline almost like a chest plate, and continuing down her shins like greaves. A glyph in the form of a white flower floats from her parted lips along wisps of mist to the hand holding the stylus. Another wisp floats across her hair before becoming a Mayan glyph that settles onto the pages she is writing. It has emerged from the hands of a figure on a Mayan stele, painted in largely monochromatic scarlet and orange with white highlights, which rises behind and to the left of the young woman. Above her head, a male face emerges in profile from the headdress depicted on the stele. The background is a modern city street, empty except for what could be rubble or water lapping against characterless apartment blocks.

Above and to the right of the seated female figure is the second part of the mural painted on a low lintel that stretches across the entrance to the stairway leading down to the main meeting area of El Centro Chicano. The lintel is about the height of a standard doorway, making it easy to view the complex and colorful images that stretch along its twelve-foot length like a frieze. (Plate 3.)

Plate 3. "Codex Frieze", 2012. Watercolor and digital print, 18.5" X 145".

At the far left of the frieze, the head and shoulders of a jaguar rise against a spiraling blue-green background, his huge open mouth breathing into an abstract pink conch shell from which white speech Mayan glyphs spiral outwards. (Plate 4.) Below the extended tongue of the jaguar is a three-lobed shape with internal spirals and three drops hanging from its bottom edge. On a mound crisscrossed by a network of roots, a yellow tree twists upwards, becoming a woman from whose shoulders tree branches sprout and become a halo of flame surrounding her. She has the sloping forehead, slanted eyes, and elaborate headdress in the style of a Mayan relief carving. Behind her trunk/skirt, a net-like half circle billows out, bordered by multihued butterflies. In one hand she holds a fan, and the other hand is held out to a man, also with Mayan features, from whose mouth droplets fall into a spiral shape on her palm. The colors in this section of the frieze are saturated, and in particular the flaming halo of red-orange stands out against the blue-green ground in vibrating complementary pairs.

Plate 4. ***Genesis,*** 2012. Watercolor and digital print, 18.5" X 30.55".

From the left side of the flaming halo, an abstract turquoise eye rests against a yellow-green map of Central America. From a more representational mouth, similar to that of the cross-legged woman, and comprised only of lips, teeth, and tongue, breath flows out across small images of a ship landing and pumpkin-breeched Europeans clubbing people to the ground. (Plate 5.)

Plate 5. ***Conquest and Slavery*****,** 2012. Watercolor and digital print, 18.5" X 22.4".

The breath continues across the image of a gibbet upon which a dozen bodies hang and that is superimposed on a map of Africa. At the feet of the hanging bodies, another European is lighting a fire. The breath becomes a spiral over the image of red-orange mountains, above which is a hand holding a pen against a background of books, painted in a gentle pink. Tall spikey agave plants emerge from the roots of the Mayan woman/tree below the open mouth, and merge with cane fields being harvested by small blue figures of men wearing rubber boots and cowboy-style hats. At the bottom of this section, painted in somber browns in contrast to the saturated polychromatic images in most of the mural, an African man lies bound in chains, squeezed into the coffin-like hold of a slave ship, with hundreds more tiny figures of captive slaves surrounding him. The ground behind the plants and the ship is painted in hot scarlet reds, and which then rises from the spikey leaves like flames.

In the center of the frieze is the largest figure, that of a mature woman whose gray hair is flowing out from under the spiral breath and the arm of the writing hand. She is facing to the right, and is fiercely singing with her fist raised. (Plate 6.) From her open mouth the white breath lines continue like a musical staff; here, however, the notes have been replaced by alternating handprints and shapes that resemble drones or falling bombs. Behind the woman fiery swirling lines surround the silhouetted shapes of men, some wearing military hats.

Plate 6. ***Resistance and Revolution,*** 2012. Watercolor and digital print, 18.5" X 30.55".

The woman is wearing a coral-pink serape upon which many figures are drawn in sepia and red. These include the mustachioed bust of a man in early twentieth century garb, protestors wearing balaclavas to cover their faces, portraits of several women are on the collar, more women carrying crosses are to their right, the iconic figure of Tommie Smith raising his fist at the 1968 Olympics, an image of the Zapatista activist, Comandante Ramona wearing a balaclava and indigenous dress speaking into a microphone, a woman singing and playing a guitar, and two women wearing head-wraps and *huichol* blouses. The lines of breath flow across the large woman's raised fist and in front of billowing orange clouds rising from flames as two helicopters fly by.

The lines of breath continue on, past a scene of melting icebergs and tidal waves engulfing a nuclear power plant that spews a toxic plume of smoke that becomes part of the billowing clouds behind the helicopters. (Plate 7.) Below this scene of destruction, the heads and shoulders of two identical young men form mirror images of one another.

Eyes downcast, the twins are heavily tattooed: the one on the left is covered in sepia images over his entire body, including his face. The twin on the right has faint jaguar spots on his torso along with the tri-lobed symbol on his chest, and luminous white marks etch his face. Behind them a large turquoise and white butterfly rises from the flames with images of Mayan warriors from the murals at Bonampak superimposed on its wings.

Plate 7. ***Gemelos,*** 2012.
Watercolor and digital print, 18.5" X 31.76".

In the final section of the frieze, the lines of breath continue their flow across the turbulent ocean waves, a row of Mayan dots and dashes, and into a stylus being held in the upraised hand of a young woman whose appearance echoes that of the young woman sitting cross-legged on the tree stump in the first section of the mural. (Plate 8.) This young woman wears a nose ring, hoop earrings, and a tank top, and looks decidedly

contemporary. She is facing left and looks back out over the length of the frieze with a quietly joyful expression. Out of her open mouth lines of breath float into her hand, behind which there is a small fiery halo that recalls the one surrounding the Mayan woman/tree from the first section of the frieze; a speech glyph in the shape of a spiral also emerges from her parted lips to hang in the air in front of her. Behind the young woman is a forest of tall twisting tree trunks bursting into greenery at their tops, their roots, from which oyster mushrooms sprout, stretching out in a tangled web towards the left; in this image the motif of tree and roots is repeated from the beginning of the frieze.

Plate 8. ***El Futuro,*** 2012.
Watercolor and digital print, 18.5" X 29.9".

Below the frieze the third and final section of the mural stretches down the slanted ceiling of the stairway that leads to the main lounge. (Plate 9.) In a vibrant complementary color scheme framed by bright ochre walls, a verdant prickly pear cactus is set against the same brilliant scarlet found in the first section of the mural. Spines emerge from diamond patterned cactus pads, but also cheerful pink, white and yellow flowers. At first glance the pads appear green, but in fact are painted in an almost iridescent array of lavenders, aquas, yellows and violets, along with myriad greens. The bottom of the cactus ends at a lintel along which roots twine outwards and end in spirals. Colorfully complex, cheerful, and tough, the cactus enlivens the descent down the short stairway to the large but cozy room below.

Plate 9. ***Nopal de Resistencia y Raices*** **,**2012**.**
Digital print and acrylic on canvas, 9’ X 15’.

Photo by permission of the artist.

THE MIRANDA LOUNGE

This room, the Miranda Lounge, serves as the main meeting area of El Centro Chicano and is painted warm light yellow ochre, except for the front wall and a pillar that are painted a rich terracotta red. The furniture is simple but comfortable, consisting of couches and armchairs in browns, beiges and striped rusty red, with earthy red, ochre and bittersweet orange cushions. On the front wall is a large flat-screen monitor, and flanking it on either side is a colorful silkscreen portrait of Rigoberta Menchu, by Melanie Cervantes, and a touching black and white photograph of Jesse Jackson holding a small cross with César Chavez. Colorful photographs of places such as Machu Picchu, Maracaibo, Venezuela, modern Havana, the Mayan ruins of Copán in Honduras, a street festival in Bogota, the Panama Canal, Tikal in Guatemala, and brightly colored buildings in Buenos Aires are hung on the side wall. Small flags of the all the countries of the Americas, including the United States (but not Canada) are draped along the front wall. Tissue paper *papeles picados* are strung from the central pillar to the walls on which textiles from Peru, Oaxaca, and Mexico are hung. Across the back wall a large painting on five canvases by Cesar Armando Torres features the *huelga* eagle and students with diplomas in their raised fists. The Words "¡Adalante Raza!" are boldly inscribed in white on the bottom edge.

On a corner that juts out into the room is a mural signed by J. P. Soto, 1988, that features the double headed serpent Quetzal, an Olmec jade votive ax, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Emiliano Zapata, Peruvian peasants, a female Sandanista, a Zoot-suited skeleton, and images that look as if inspired by Diego Rivera murals. The lounge is

warm, relaxed, and thoughtfully decorated, and the complex and densely packed narrative of the mural that greets visitors in the lobby upstairs provides an intriguing entry to this welcoming space.

ICONOGRAPHY OF *THE SPIRAL WORD*

The mural, titled *The Spiral Word: el Codex Estánfor*, was created in 2012 by artist Juana Alicia, and because its imagery is complex, dense, and often subtle, she has provided a written narrative that is posted on the wall at El Centro Chicano, and can also be found on her website, to help the viewer decode the iconography. The meaning of much of the imagery in *The Spiral Word* may not be apparent to most viewers, (myself included) so that a second reading of the mural with knowledge gained from the information in the written narrative provides the viewer with a much deeper understanding, and further research based on the information provided in Juana Alicia's narrative reveals to the engaged viewer a wealth of information about the culture and history of Latin America that inspired *The Spiral Word*.

In the first paragraph of the signage, Juana Alicia explains her overall concept for the mural;

> This work is inspired by the history and literature of multiethnic Latinoamerica, from the ancient stories of the *Popol Vuh* to modern *Xican@* poetry. Each of the four surfaces has its own role to play in the story and in the space: this is one of the smallest, most compact and narrative-dense works I have created. The challenge was to create a series of works that altered an institutional-feeling entryway into a sanctuary for some of our collective narratives as multi-faceted *Latin@s* [sic] and original peoples of these continents. I wanted to create a space for students to find beauty and honor for their identities as Latin Americans at Stanford, to create a place that both narrated our legacies and celebrated our cultural projects. I wanted the murals to create a feeling of safety and pride and stimulate historical consciousness with regard to our evolution as a people. I sought to represent past, present and future realities for *Latin@*/Indigenous

students at Stanford.[9]

The second paragraph of Juana Alicia's narrative describes the first section of the mural, *Mayan Scribe* (Plate 2), a digital print and acrylic on canvas panel, applied like wallpaper. Of this panel Juana Alicia says,

> The scribe has ideas of her own to pen onto the unfolding codex: creation myths and stories of conquest and survival, from the various centuries that she has survived, a witness to our story. She sits with a conch shell full of pigment in one hand, writing stylus in the other, on the trunk of a ceiba tree, its thorns protecting her. Among the ruins of Mesoamerican culture, stone sculptures and ancient masks whisper stories into her ears. The ruins of the barrios of our continents, from Sao Paolo to the Bronx, sit behind her as well, echoing the immigration stories of sacrifice, survival and triumph.[10]

Although this paragraph informs the viewer of the theme of the *Mayan Scribe*, much further research is needed to fully understand every piece of visual information densely filling this panel, and indeed the entire mural. To begin with, the Mayan scribe is female, and most historic images of Mayan scribes portray them as clearly male. However, in their book, *The Art of the Maya Scribe*, Michael D. Coe and Justin Kerr ask

> Were the royal scribes of the classic Maya exclusively men? Epigraphers have noted that the *ah k'u hun* on one painted vase has already been noted [Fig. 54]; immediately on her left, standing before the throne, a robed figure bears brush pens in her headdress. Surely these examples imply that noble, even royal, women could be scribes, and that the *ah k'u hun* title was basically 'gender blind' in spite of the male proclitic *ah*.[11]

In their book *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, authors Mary Miller and Karl Taube describe a codex as a

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[9] Juana Alicia "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estáfor," Juana Alicia @ El Centro Chicano, accessed March 26, 2014. http://juanaaliciaatcentro.wordpress.com /narrative-for-murals-at-el-centro-chicano-de-estanfor/.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Michael D. Coe and Justin Kerr, *The Art of the Maya Scribe* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 99.

> native screen-fold book formed of strips of pounded bark paper or deer hide painted on both sides with a fine coating of fine lime gesso. These strips were carefully folded into equal widths, with each fold creating two pages on opposite sides of the manuscript. Once folded, intricate scenes were first carefully outlined and then frequently filled in with brilliant colors. They contained a wealth of information about gods and rituals, mythology, history, flora, fauna, and even trade and tribute. Unfortunately due to intolerance and neglect, only a small portion of these books survive to this day. Some 25 Postclassic and early colonial screen-fold codices are known, with 18 of these being in the pre-Conquest style.[12]

The stone sculpture that Juana Alicia describes in her narrative resembles the steles found at the Classic Maya site of Copán in Honduras, possibly Stele D portraying Ruler 13 (Waxaklajuun-Ub'aah-K'awiil), 736 CE, or Stele C, portrait of 18 Rabbit (Uaxac Lahun ubac C'awil), both important rulers.[13] The tree-trunk the scribe is sitting on is a ceiba, a genus of Neotropical trees that are among the tallest in the forest. Many species of ceiba have large thorns protruding from the straight, branchless trunk, which was used to make canoes.[14] Authors Mary Miller and Karl Taube describe the ceiba as having "its roots in the underworld and its branches in the heavens, this great tree connected the planes of sky, earth, and underworld."[15] It was considered by the Maya to be the sacred tree of life, the *axis mundi*.

The skin of the scribe is covered in tattoos from many cultures, all of which have specific meanings, meanings that might be obscure to the casual observer. In an interview with me Juana Alicia described some of the specific symbols tattooed on the

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[12] Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1993), 65.

[13] William L. Fash, *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings: the City of Copán and the Ancient Maya*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 113, pl. 68.

[14] Miller and Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, 186.

[15] Ibid.

scribe;[16] on her right shoulder is the Aztec *ollin* which can be seen framing the face at the center of the famous Aztec *Sun Stone*, and which symbolizes change and movement. There is an Egyptian lotus blossom on the scribe's chest, and the Incan stepped cross, or *Chakana*, radiates out from her navel, representing the three realms of existence. The hole in the middle of the *Chakana* is the liminal axis, and also represents Cuzco, the center of the Incan world. A three-lobed spiral motif appears below the scribe's breasts, a motif that is seen several more times in the mural. The three-lobed motif can be seen in murals found in the ancient Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacán, and represents the human heart.[17]

The codex that the scribe is writing appears as the frieze above and to her right, over the entrance to a stairway that leads down to the main facilities at the Centro Chicano, (Plate 3.) It is a flat surface, but is painted in five subtle sections, emulating the form of a folded codex. Juana Alicia has titled and written narrative for each section, essential for decoding the dense and complex imagery, but again, the engaged viewer must do further research to fully understand each image. The first section of the codex is titled *Genesis,* (Plate 4), and Juana Alicia explains here that

> The tale of the finished codex above the scribe on the frieze begins with the sacred creation story of the Maya, where the jaguar breathes song into a conch, which sings the creation story of the Popol Vuh: the Princess Ixquic is a blooming tree, bearing the strange fruit of Hun Hunapu's head. With his last breath, he spits into her hand, impregnating her with the warrior twins Hunapu and Xbalanque. They appear later in the story, in the form of the underworld ball game with the gods of Xibalbá (the underworld) as illustrated in the battle scene from the ancient

[16] Juana Alicia interviewed by the author, Berkeley, Ca., May 29, 2013. Further citations will be abbreviated as JA/AC.

[17] Michael Coe and Rex Koontz, *Mexico: from the Olmecs to the Aztecs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 115.

frescoes from Bonampak, Chiapas, Mexico.[18]

The jaguar, seen at the far left of the *Genesis* section, is associated with power and transformation and is linked to the first world, or first sun, which was named *Nahui Ocelotl* (4 Jaguar).[19] In *Genesis,* his huge open mouth is breathing into a pink conch shell from which speech glyphs spiral outwards. Below the conch shell is the triple spiral motif repeated throughout the mural. This image resembles the depiction of a jaguar found among the murals at Teotihuacán in which the jaguar is blowing a pink conch shell trumpet from which speech glyphs emerge, with three drops of blood below it. In another similar image from Teotihuacán, the triple spiral motif appears in front of the open mouth of a coyote, and as in the one tattooed on the *Mayan Scribe's* torso, it is a symbol of the human heart, from which three drops of blood fall.[20]

The blood drops flow into the ground and nourish the roots of the princess Ixquic who is depicted as another tree of life. The blossoms at the ends of the branches are vivid flames, and among them is caught Hun Hunahpu,[21] looking very much alive and whole. As told in the sacred book of the Maya, the *Popol Vuh*, Hun-Hunahpú and Vucub-Hunahpú were brothers who were called to Xibalba, the Mayan underworld, by angry gods who tricked them with the prospect of a ball game. Instead the brothers were sacrificed and Hun-Hunahpú's head was placed in a barren tree that then miraculously

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[18] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estáfor."

[19] Miller and Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, 70.

[20] Ibid. 92.

[21] The image of Hun Hunahpú closely resembles a drawing on page 69 in Miller and Taube of the god rising out of the tortoise earth – the netted pattern is actually the tortoise shell. The netted skirt surrounding the princess is from this image.

bore fruit. "And the Lords of Xibalba said: 'Let no one come to pick this fruit. Let no one come and sit under this tree!'"[22] However, the princess Xquic desired the miraculous fruit and reached her hand up to the skull of Hun-Hunahpú. According to the *Popol Vuh,*

> In that instant the skull let a few drops of spittle fall directly into the maiden's palm. 'In my saliva and spittle I have given you my descendants. Now my head has nothing on it anymore, it is nothing but a skull with out flesh. So are the heads of the great princes, the flesh is all which gives them a handsome appearance. And when they die men are frightened by their bones. So, too, is the nature of the sons, which are like saliva and spittle, they may be sons of a lord, of a wise man, or of an orator. They do not lose their substance when they go, they bequeath it; the image of the lord, of the wise man, or of the orator does not disappear, nor is it lost, but he leaves it to the daughters and to the sons which he begets. I have done the same with you. Go up, then, to the surface of the earth that you may not die.[23]

Ixquic, a virgin, is impregnated by the spittle and her father accuses her of being a whore, ordering her to be sacrificed and her heart brought to him in a gourd. She cleverly talks her way out of certain death and is saved by a tree, having her would be-killers gather its blood red sap which then forms a ball in the gourd. Not long afterwards, she gives birth to the hero twins Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

The Princess Ixquic's tree is another image of the tree of life, an important motif that recurs in the *Spiral Word*. The tree's roots, also a recurring motif, snake towards the center of the frieze, where the roots of the tree of life become the roots of henequen plants. The second section of the codex is titled *Conquest and Slavery* (Plate 5), and in her narrative Juana Alicia explains that

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[22] Delia Goetz and Sylvanus G. Morley, from the translation of Adrían Morley, *Popol Vuh, the Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 118.

[23] Ibid. 119 - 120.

> in this next panel, the scribe's story continues, with the burning of her libraries, the entrapment of her indigenous and African brothers and sisters, the slave ships landing in the Americas, forced labor in cane and henequen fields, and in the silver and copper mines. The hand of Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz inscribes her observations of injustice, penning the revelations of the first feminist writer on the colonial Americas.[24]

Juana Alicia's written narrative becomes essential to decoding the imagery in *Conquest and Slavery*; in particular the disembodied hand of the writer has been given a specific identity, that of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. In his lengthy biography of de la Cruz, Mexican poet Octavio Paz describes her as a 17th century Mexican nun and writer who was an ardent advocate for women's right to an education. She wanted to disguise her self as a man in order to attend college but was not allowed to, and so was largely self-taught. Rather than marriage, she chose to enter the convent where she had some freedom to pursue her unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Paz quotes a poem of hers in which she argues that since God gave women intelligence, He would not want them to remain ignorant:

> It is of service to the Church
> that women argue, tutor, learn,
> for he who granted women reason
> would not have them uninformed.[25]

The scribe's story is continued in the form of breath that is seen flowing past ships landing in the New World, people being beaten, and a group of naked people hanging from a gibbet imposed on an image of continental Africa. Below this group, a conquistador is setting a fire, perhaps under the feet of the hanged people, or as Juana

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[24] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[25] Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana, or the Traps of Faith* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 435.

Alicia narrates, to the libraries of the Mayan scribe. Huge numbers of codices were burned by the Spanish, and as 16th century Bishop of Yucatán Diego de Landa writes; "We found a great number of books in these [Mayan] letters and, since they contained nothing but superstitions and falsehoods of the devil, we burned them all, which they took most grievously, and which gave them great pain."[26]

Between the spiral breath and the slave ship are the spiky fields of henequen and sugar cane, in which men labor to cut and carry the cane. Although Juana Alicia's narrative mentions silver and copper mines, neither the mines nor the miners can be seen in *The Spiral Word*. A possible explanation for this absence is that Juana Alicia cites the Argentine writer Eduardo Galeano as a literary source for her visual imagery, and in his book *The Open Veins of Latin America*, Galeano writes powerfully of the effects of colonization in the New World, going into particular detail on the subjects of sugar and henequen plantations, and the silver mines of Bolivia. The importance of Galeano's writing to the design of *The Spiral Codex* will be further discussed in Chapter Four. For now it is sufficient to say that the Bolivian silver miners are there in spirit, if not in fact.

The images of despair in *Slavery and Conquest* lead to the hot red center of the mural, the third section of the codex, titled *Resistance and Revolution* (Plate 6.) The middle section of the frieze is the complex balancing point, crowded with imagery that requires Juana Alicia's narrative as well as further research to decode and then understand.

> The large figure of the late, great singer Mercedes Sosa, "the voice of Latin America", carries images of struggle and triumph against imperialism on her serape, bearing portraits of writers and activists. From left to right:

[26] Diego de Landa, *Yucatan Before and After the Conquest*, trans. William Gates (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1978), 13, 82.

1. Cuban poet José Martí
2. Mexican Zapatistas
3. Guatemalan women
4. Chilean composer, songwriter, folklorist, ethnomusicologist, and visual artist Violeta Parra
5. (on her collar) Black freedom fighter Asata Shakur; Nobel Laureate poet Gabriela Mistral and the Mirabal sisters (the Butterflies of the Dominican Republic whose activism brought on the downfall of dictator Rafael Trujillo)
6. Mujeres de Negro/Women in Black, mothers of disappeared women of Juarez, Mexico
7. African America Athletes John Carlos and Tommie Smith raise their fists in the Black Power Salute at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City
8. Comandante Ramona of the Zapatistas addresses the public.[27]

Behind the figure of Mercedes Sosa are the small silhouettes of men; these are what Juana Alicia refers to elsewhere as "the dictators", and will be discussed further in Chapter Four. For more information about "the dictators" see Appendix C.

Mercedes Sosa, (1935 – 2009), was an Argentine singer and activist who was called the "voice of the voiceless", and in her BBC News obituary was cited for "championing the poor and fighting for political change." She ran afoul of the military dictatorship in Argentina in 1979, and "was searched and arrested on stage along with all of those attending her concert." She was banned from recording and lived in Europe for several years, but ultimately outlasted the dictatorship and returned to Argentina. Her many accomplishments include becoming a good will ambassador for UNICEF.[28]

The first portrait on Sosa's serape is that of José Martí (1853 – 1895), a Cuban poet, essayist, revolutionary philosopher and freedom fighter for Cuba's independence from Spain, who died trying to liberate Cuba from the Spanish. He was killed in the Battle of

[27] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[28] "Latin Artist Mercedes Sosa Dies," *BBC News*, October 4, 2009, accessed March 14, 2016. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/8289370.stm.

Dos Rios and became a national hero as well as an important Latin American literary figure, whose works promoting the ideas of liberty and democracy for all of Latin America had an impact on later revolutionary writers such as Ruben Dario of Nicaragua and Gabriela Mistral of Chile.

To the left of Martí is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, or EZLN) a revolutionary leftist group composed mainly of indigenous peoples based in the Mexican state of Chiapas. Most active in the 1990s, the Zapatista uprising coincided with the launch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which, according to freelance journalist Duncan Tucker, indigenous farmers felt would "force them to compete with a wave of cheap US imports, while under the terms of the agreement the Mexican government had revoked their constitutional right to communal land."[29] Twenty years after the first uprising the group still exists and is still fighting for indigenous land rights, education, healthcare, jobs, food, and democracy, often against military harassment. According to Tucker, the Zapatistas have provided a role model for radical movements around the world, including Occupy, Spain's Indignados, and Direct Democracy Now in Greece. In *The Spiral Word* the Zapatistas are marching in protest, wearing balaclavas to hide their faces, and carrying a banner with the image of Emiliano Zapata, the peasant hero of the Mexican Revolution. Eduardo Galeano wrote poetically of the Zapatistas,

> Mist is the ski mask the jungle wears. That's how it hides its persecuted children. From the mist they emerge, to the mist they return. The Indians of Chiapas wear

[29] Duncan Tucker, "Are Mexico's Zapatista Rebels Still Relevant?," *Aljazeera*, January 1, 2014, accessed March 30, 2014. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/are-mexico-zapatista-rebels-still-relevant-20141183731812643.

> majestic clothing, they float when they walk, and they speak softly or remain silent. These princes condemned to servitude were their first and the last. They've been run off the land and out of the history books, and they've found refuge in mist, in mystery. From there they've emerged, wearing masks, to unmask the power that humiliates them.[30]

Below and to the right of Martí and the Zapatistas, the images of two Guatemalan women are seen, one of whom is in profile and wearing a head-wrap of traditional indigenous fabric. This image closely resembles a photograph of an indigenous woman in court during the trial of Guatemala's ex-general and dictator Efraín Rios Montt for genocide in 2011.[31] Susan Rothlisberger reports that Rios Montt was convicted of genocide

> against the Ixil tribe located in the department of Quiché, north Guatemala. Ten Ixil women testified about the sexual violence that they, and many more, were subjected to. "After a community was attacked, women were taken as spoils of war to military camps where they were raped and forced to carry out domestic labour," says photojournalist and activist for women's rights, Cristina Chiquin.[32]

The violence has continued for the women of Guatemala. At least 2,200 have been murdered since 2006 according to Amnesty International, and this violence must be partly viewed as a legacy of the horrific civil war during which more than 200,000 people were killed. According to Angélica Cházaro, Jennifer Casey, and Katherine Ruhl,

> These gender-based murders, frequently executed with extreme brutality and sexual violence, have been labeled 'feminicides.' Perpetrators of the feminicides enjoy widespread impunity for their crimes.[33] Feminicide is only the most

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[30] Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down, a Primer for the Looking-glass World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 323.

[31] Silvia Rothlisberger, "Guatemala: Fighting for Women's Rights", *Latin America Bureau*, Tuesday May 14, 2013, accessed February 21, 2016. http://lab.org.uk/guatemala- fighting-for-womens-rights.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Angélica Cházaro, Jennifer Casey, and Katherine Ruhl, "Getting Away with Murder, Guatemala's Failure to Protect Women and Rodi Alvarado's Quest for Safety,"

> extreme expression of violence against Guatemalan women, and must be viewed in the context of their systematic oppression. Conditions in Guatemala, which include a high incidence of violence in the home, a thirty-six year legacy of war violence targeting women, and deeply rooted patriarchal traditions enshrined in the legal code, have set the stage for this epidemic of violence against women.[34]

Above and to the right of the Guatemalan women is the image of "Chilean composer, songwriter, folklorist, ethnomusicologist and visual artist Violeta Parra."[35] Her work became the basis for "Chilean New Song," the *nueva canción chilena*, a revival and reimagining of Chilean folk music, which spread far beyond Chile. *Gracias a la Vida,* Parra's most popular song, was recorded by many activist-singers including Mercedes Sosa and Joan Baez.

The collar of the serape is crowded with the images of revolutionary women. The first is Assata Shakur, an African-American activist and member of the now inactive Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army.[36] In 1973 she was involved in a confrontation with New Jersey State Troopers during which State Trooper Werner Foerster was killed. She was convicted of his murder and imprisoned, but escaped in 1979 and is now living in exile in Cuba. In 2013 the FBI gave her the dubious distinction of becoming the first woman on its Most Wanted list and classified her as a domestic terrorist, but so far attempts to extradite her to the U. S. have failed. She remains a controversial figure; terrorist to some, revolutionary hero to others. According to Mychal Denzel Smith,

> 'I am only one woman,' Shakur wrote in her open letter, but the FBI has decided

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in *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Américas*, ed. Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano (Duke University Press, 2012), 93.

[34] Ibid. 99.

[35] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[36] The Black Liberation Army was an underground black nationalist organization made up of former members of the Black Panthers, active between 1970 and 1981.

> to make her more than that. She is a symbol of what it means to be a black woman who dares fight back. You don't need to be sporting one of those 'red, black and green liberation jump-suits' that Gil Scott-Heron talked about in order to see that this ramped up manhunt is unnecessary and an abuse of power. But it should also remind us that the struggle Shakur and her comrades took bullets for is still not over.[37]

Gabriela Mistral is also featured on the collar of the serape. She was the first (and so far only) Latin American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature according to the Nobel website, *"*for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world."[38] After her death in 1957 her words were inscribed on her gravestone: "What the soul is to the body, so is the artist to his people."[39]

Finally on the collar are the "Butterflies of the Dominican Republic," featured in Julia Alvarez' novel *In the Time of the Butterflies,* a fictional account of the Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa, who were murdered during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, on November 25, 1960. Dedé, the fourth Mirabal sister, escaped death because she was not in the car with her sisters when they were driving an isolated road on the night of November 25th. The Mirabal sisters were mythologized for their courage and their martyrdom, fighting against a brutal dictator, and became known as "Las Mariposas". Julia Alvarez' own family had escaped into exile in the United States shortly before the Mirabal sisters were murdered in a cane field, their bodies put back

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[37] Mychal Denzel Smith, "Assata Shakur is not a Terrorist," *The Nation*, May 7, 2013, accessed September 27, 2013. http://www.thenation.com/blog/174209/assata-shakur-not-terrorist#

[38] "The Nobel Prize in Literature 1945," Nobel Prize, accessed June 8, 2014. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1945/mistral-facts.html

[39] "Gabriela Mistral (1945)," Poetseers, accessed June 8, 2014. http://www.poetseers.org/nobel-prize-for-literature/gabriela-mistral-1945/.

into their car which was then pushed over a cliff so it would look like an accident. In her postscript, Alvarez writes, "November 25th, the day of their murder, is observed by many Latin American countries as the International Day Against Violence Towards Women. Obviously, these sisters, who fought one tyrant have served as models for women fighting against injustices of all kinds."[40]

On the shoulder of the serape, to the right of the collar, is an image of the Mujeres de Negro, an organization of women formed to denounce the ongoing and unsolved murders of young women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Since 1993 more than a thousand women and girls have been violently killed. According to Melissa Wright, some of the first bodies were "found in an empty lot that sits at a highly trafficked intersection in southeastern Ciudad Juárez, across street from the Maquiladora Industry Association (AMAC) offices, about two kilometers from Wal-Mart and down the street from a prestigious country club."[41] The Mujeres de Negro wear the "black clothing of mourning, domesticity, and female modesty to express their identities as social justice and human rights activists. Particularly throughout the Americas of the twentieth century, the black-dressed woman activist has played a high-profile role in challenging repressive governments, neo-liberal politics, and state-sanctioned violence."[42] In one protest march, the Mujeres de Negro erected a wooden cross at the international bridge crossing the Rio Grande into El Paso, Texas. Driven into the cross were 268 nails,

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[40] Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 324.

[41] Melissa Wright, "Paradoxes, Protests, and the Mujeres de Negro of Northern Mexico," *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Américas*, eds. Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano (Duke University Press, 2012), 314.

[42] Ibid. 316.

representing each woman and girl murdered. This crisis of unchecked violence against women in Ciudad Juárez has received international attention because of the perceived lack of response by the Mexican government to the ongoing "femicide" (the misogynous murder of women by men) of mostly young and poor women, many of who work in the *maquiladora*s, or in solving their murders. (For further information on *maquiladoras* and femicide, see Appendix B.)

Standing tall, fists raised in the air, African-American athletes John Carlos and Tommy Smith are depicted in the folds of Mercedes Sosa's serape under her raised arm, their stances echoing her clenched fist. Icons of the Civil Rights movement, San Jose State University students Smith and Carlos won the gold and bronze medals respectively for the 200-meter track event at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. During the medal ceremony, they raised their fists in the "black power salute," causing an uproar. Many people in the audience booed them as they left the podium, and the Olympic Committee condemned their actions as a "deliberate and violent breach of the fundamental principles of the Olympic spirit."[43] Smith later said, "If I win I am an American, not a black American. But if I did something bad then they would say 'a Negro'. We are black and we are proud of being black. Black America will understand what we did tonight."[44]

The Black Power salute was in lieu of a total boycott of the Olympics by black American athletes, an idea that never materialized, and that had been proposed by San Jose State University instructor of sociology Harry Edwards. Lee Evans, a San Jose State

[43] "1968: Black Athletes Make Silent Protest", BBC News, On This Day, accessed November 14, 2013. http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/17/newsid_3535000/3535348.stm

[44] Ibid.

University teammate of Tommy Smith, described how white professors interacted with black students;

> 'They don't talk to the next Negro who passes by.' Smith added that his white instructors never wanted to discuss his performances on exams or anything about his personal life; they only wanted to talk about his races and his world records. Evans took this to mean: "They know us as the fastest nigger(s) on campus…. They don't say nigger but that's what they mean." These words would become a refrain for prospective boycotters.[45]

Today San José State University takes great pride in its former students and has honored the contributions Tommie Smith and John Carlos made to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s with an enormous poly-chromed mosaic-covered sculpture by Ricardo Gouvela, known as Rigo 23, created in 2005 and featured prominently in the Sculpture Garden between Clark Hall and Tower Hall.

The final image on Mercedes Sosa's serape is that of Comandante Ramona, a tiny Totzil woman who, with Subcomandante Marcos, led the Zapatista movement. She is placed at the edge of the serape next to Sosa's raised fist in such a way that it looks as if the raised fist is Comandante Ramona's as well. Speaking into a microphone, she is clothed in the attire for which she became most known: a colorfully beribboned traditional dress which is in stark contrast to the black balaclava that covers her head and most of her face, hiding her identity. On New Years Day 1994, Comandante Ramona led the Zapatistas into the town of San Cristóbal de las Casas to demand rights for the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, and to protest the North American Free Trade Agreement, which went into effect that day. She was also a women's rights activist, and in a

[45] Douglas Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 47-48.

powerful speech she laid out the principal points of the Zapatista "Women's Revolutionary Law", closing with these rousing words:

> We Mexican Indians know how to resist, we are not going to allow the power to continue with its human sacrifices. We have on our side, the justice, the reason and the *historia*. We will win and are going to construct a Mexico with all of you.
>
> *Excerpt from speech on March 11, 1997*[46]

Comandante Ramona died in 2006, and her true identity remains unknown.

The fourth "page" of the codex frieze is titled *Gemelos*, the Spanish word for twins. Juana Alicia's narrative for this section reads

> The warrior twins of the Popol Vuh, Hunapu and Xbalanque, appear as depicted in the frescoes of Bonampak, Chiapas, Mexico, and as modern opposites: the gangster and the dreamer. Behind them, the Ollin [sic] butterfly, the Aztec symbol for movement and balance, holds out against the forces of war, nuclear destruction, the fireball of Fukushima and the melting icebergs of our current historical moment.

In front of the warrior twins are the modern twins; the tattoos on the gangster twin on the left cover his face, and denote an irrevocable commitment to gang life. On his body, the tattoo imagery includes a hand holding a hypodermic needle and opium poppy seed-pods representing the war on drugs and addiction, an armed border guard, a pair of hands handcuffed around his neck, and a teardrop tattoo under his right eye, probably signifying prison time. The teardrop tattoo is said to have many meanings, the most notorious of which is that the wearer has killed someone. The *maquiladora* worker is on his left breast, and the border fence runs up his left arm, with someone attempting to climb it.

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[46] Comandante Ramona, "Message from Comandante Ramona, to the students of University City." *csuchico.edu*, accessed February, 21, 2016. http://www.csuchico.edu/zapatist/HTML/Archive/Communiques/romana_at_uni_mar.html

The visionary twin has faint markings that resemble the spots of a jaguar, a liminal animal often associated with Mesoamerican shamanic practice.[47] The face of the dreamer twin, unlike that of his brother, is not tattooed; rather, it is traced with pale biomorphic markings. Around his neck is a tattooed collar of keyhole motifs, and on his chest is a design that is reminiscent of the tri-lobed heart motif from Teotihuacán, found repeatedly throughout the entire mural.

The two sets of twins are superimposed onto "the Ollin [sic] butterfly, the Aztec symbol for movement and balance."[48] The *ollin* can most famously be found in the center of the Aztec Sun Stone, and according to Beatríz de la Fuente,

> It is well known that the relief represents the fifth sun and the entire cosmos. The predominant forms are concentric rings, which contain the very universe from its nucleus (the innermost ring) to its limits (the outermost ring). The deity's face occupies the center, and to his sides we can see his hands or claws that imprison hearts. The god appears within the *ollin* sign (which means 'movement'), four rectangular panels that converge in a circle, like the blades of a fan.[49]

The *ollin* butterfly "holds out against the forces of war, nuclear destruction, the fireball of Fukushima and the melting icebergs of our current historical moment."[50] Behind the butterfly, helicopters spin against a churning red and orange cloud of smoke pouring from the nuclear reactor at Fukushima in Japan which is overwhelmed by huge waves, and in the far distance, we see the disappearing ice-packs of the poles.

Fukushima is the nuclear power plant that was inundated by a tsunami, caused by an

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[47] Miller and Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya,* 103.

[48] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[49] Beatríz de la Fuente, "Traces of an Identity" in *The Aztec Empire*, ed. Filipe Solis (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2004), 41.

[50] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

earthquake on March 11, 2011, that killed 16,000 people. The plant had three meltdowns, and as many as 300,000 people were forced to evacuate. Fukushima remains in the news; according to NBC News, reported in October 2013, "Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear plant has suffered yet another leak, spilling out 430 liters of contaminated water thousands of times more radioactive than legal limits."[51]

The melting icebergs behind the butterfly are emblematic of climate change. In a speech she gave on September 20, 2013 Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy stated,

> The overwhelming judgment of science tells us that climate change is real, human activities are fueling that change, and we must take action to avoid the most devastating consequences. We know this is not just about melting glaciers. Climate change – caused by carbon pollution – is one of the most significant public health threats of our time.[52]

In April of 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations body, warned;

> Scientists fear that exceeding that level could produce drastic effects, such as the collapse of ice sheets, a rapid rise in sea levels, difficulty growing enough food, huge die-offs of forests, and mass extinctions of plant and animal species.[53]

This scene of contemporary environmental disaster gives rise to the final section of the

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[51] Arata Yamamoto and Alexander Smith, "Water 6,700 time more radioactive than legal limit spills from Fukushima", NBC News, October 3, 2013, accessed October 3, 2013. http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/10/03/20797895-water-6700-times-more-radioactive-than-legal-limit-sp.

[52] Gina McCarthy, "Remarks on Carbon Pollution Standards for New Power Plants", Environmental Protection Agency, accessed February 20, 2016. http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/8d49f7ad4bbcf4ef852573590040b7f6/a2313a88f5e593bc85257bf1006ca2ba!OpenDocument

[53] Justin Gillis, "Climate Effort Falling Short, U. N. Panel Says", *The New York Times*, April 13, 2014, accessed March 4, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/14/science/earth/un-climate-panel-warns-speedier-action-is-needed-to-avert-disaster.html?_r=0

codex titled *El Futuro*, (Plate 8.) As Juana Alicia describes it in her narrative,

> The year 2012, or 5.334 in the Mayan long count, signals the end of the current cycle and the beginning of a new one, starting over from zero to a count into the future. The future holds a vision of reforestation and ecological renewal, with mycelium fungi reclaiming toxic waste sites. The scribe writes back to history, connecting her thoughts and voice with those of her ancestors.

The scribe of the future is a young contemporary woman, wearing a tank top and hoop earrings; she is modeled on Juana Alicia's daughter, as is the scribe seen in the first section of the mural. Behind her is a reforested world of tangled tree trunks whose canopies spread against a blue sky and whose roots wriggle back towards the princess Ixquic's tree of life in the first section of the codex. A cluster of oyster mushrooms sprout from the roots, representing a "vision of reforestation and ecological renewal, with mycelium fungi reclaiming toxic waste sites."[54]

Mycelia are the thread-like vegetative part of a fungus, largely growing underground, of which the mushroom is the fruiting body. In a TED[55] talk, mycologist Paul Stamets, who studies mycelium, lists several ways that this fungus can "save the world" including cleansing polluted soil in a process he calls *mycoremediation*,

> The mycelium absorbs the oil. The mycelium is producing enzymes — peroxydases — that break carbon-hydrogen bonds. These're [sic] the same bonds that hold hydrocarbons together. So the mycelium become saturated with the oil, and then, when we returned 6 weeks later, all the tarps were removed, all the other piles were dead, dark, and stinky. We came back to our pile, it was covered with hundreds of pounds of oyster mushrooms –But something else happened, which was an epiphany in my life. They sporulated, the spores attract insects, the insects laid eggs, eggs became larvae. Birds then came, bringing in seeds, and our pile

[54] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[55] TED stands for technology, entertainment, and design, and is a "platform for ideas worth spreading". Videos of TED talks are available at https://www.ted.com/.

became an oasis of life.[56]

This hopeful image of a clean and peaceful world marks the end of the codex section of *The Spiral Word.*

The final panel of the three-part mural extends down the sloped ceiling of the stairway from the lobby of El Centro Chicano to the main facilities, linking the spaces together visually. *Nopal de Resistencia y Raices*, is a vivid green prickly pear bursting with flowers set against a crimson background, (Plate 9.) As Juana Alicia describes it;

> During the process of creating the murals, the cactus bloomed into an organism with its own voice, shaking off any further elaborations. It represents the beautiful, burgeoning growth in the harshest of environments, the gift of remaining fruitful and full of water in the middle of a desert, the joyful energy of resistance and the blossoming of ideas and culture. The roots that extend onto the frieze below the ceiling curl into speech glyph forms, pulling inspiration from the earth itself.[57]

The nopal, also known as the prickly pear cactus, deserves further elaboration. It has had, and continues to have, considerable significance in Mesoamerican culture.[58] It is

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[56] "Paul Stamets, "Six Ways Mushrooms Can Save the World", TED, accessed December 14, 2013. http://blog.ted.com/2008/05/06/paul_stamets/e

[57] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at El Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[58] The nopal is an important plant of many uses; the flat paddle-like cladodes (*pencas*) are eaten as well as the fruit, and are also made into an alcoholic beverage called *colonche*. In Mexican folk medicine the pulp and juice are used to treat many health problems including wounds, and inflammations of the intestinal and urinary tracts. The scale insect that is still used to make the beautiful red cochineal dye lives on the cactus and feeds on its sap. In Colonial times cochineal was a highly valuable export along with indigo; "Both the indigo plant and the cochineal bug, busily multiplying on the prickly surface of the nopal cactus, were in steady demand in European textile industries, but both of these natural pigments met a synthetic death around 1850, when German chemists invented aniline and other cheaper dyes, in a victory of the laboratory over nature." Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*, 105.

Nopal is now sold as a nutritional supplement, and is touted as something of a miracle food, supporting the immune system, as well as pancreatic, insulin, and blood sugar functions, healthy cholesterol, and enhanced bowel function. "Nopal Blood Sugar™

depicted in the Sixteenth Century Codex Mendoza, which "can be read in many ways, but one is as a map of Tenochtitlán. At the center is the eagle in a cactus, the place symbol of Tenochtitlán and used on the Mexican flag today."[59] According to Brian Fagan,

> The legends tell how Huitzilopochtli appeared before one of the priests, ordering him to search for a cactus where a great eagle perched – Tenochtitlán, "the Place of the Prickly Pear Cactus." The next day, the people found the place. The eagle was the symbol of the sun, of the god himself. The cactus fruit was red, and in the shape of the human hearts that the sun devoured.[60]

CONCLUSION

Here the tough beauty and usefulness of the *nopal* provide a fitting coda to a deeply felt and complex artwork, one that, if the viewer is willing to penetrate the brightly colored surface, speaks volumes about Latin American literature and history. In her artist's statement, Juana Alicia asserts that she feels "it is my responsibility as an artist to be an activist for social justice, human rights and environmental health, and I see the work of parenting and teaching akin to being an artist."[61] How then does *The Spiral Word* and Juana Alicia's previous work fit into the tradition of didactic mural making, particularly as seen in the Bay Area? Furthermore, what does it mean to be a critical muralist, and how does Juana Alicia, her body of work, and specifically *The Spiral Word,* embody contemporary activist art as a tool for critical consciousness raising? Chapters Two and Three will address those questions.

Nopal Cactus," Healthforce Nutritionals, accessed February 20, 2014. http://healthforce.com /longevity-immunity/nopal-blood-sugar-nopal-cactus.

[59] Mary Ellen Miller, *The Art of Mesoamerica: from Olmec to Aztec* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 240.

[60] Brian Fagan, *From Black Land to Fifth Sun* (Helix Books, 1998), 337.

[61] Juana Alicia, "An Introduction to Juana Alicia", juanaalicia.com, accessed November 30, 2013. http://www.juanaalicia.com/about/.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ARTIST'S CONTEXT

> "Forms, colors, sensuous relationships, rhythms, textures, tones, transmutations of energy, all belong to the natural world. Before humans arrived, their power was there; they were nameless yet not powerless. To touch their power, humans had to name them: whorl, branch, rift, stipple, crust, cone, striation, froth, sponge, flake, fringe, gully, rut, tuft, grain, bunch, slime, scale, spine, streak, globe. Over so many millennia, so many cultures, humans have reached into preexisting nature and made art: to celebrate, to drive off evil, to nourish memory, to conjure the desired visitation.
>
> The revolutionary artist, the relayer of possibility, draws on such powers, in opposition to a technocratic society's hatred of multiformity, hatred of the natural world, hatred of the body, hatred of darkness and women, hatred of disobedience. The revolutionary poet loves people, rivers, other creatures, stones, trees inseparably from art, is not ashamed of any of these loves, and for them conjures a language that is public, intimate, inviting, terrifying, and beloved."[62]
>
> - Adrienne Rich

In Juana Alicia's cheerful kitchen, on the wall above a tabletop on which she painted a large yellow rose, Adrienne Rich's powerful words have been printed by hand and framed as a gift by Miranda Bergman, one of Juana Alicia's *comadres* on the Women's Building mural, *MaestraPeace*. It is a reminder that art and life are not separate entities, that the personal is the political, and that it is not necessary to make a choice between beauty and activism. Adrienne Rich writes, perhaps of the muralist Miranda Bergman: "Do I envy my friend the muralist? On some days, yes: I imagine that she, at least, must feel no division between her art and action." Rich goes on to refute the "falsely framed choices: ivory tower or barricades, intuition or documentary fact, the search for beauty or

[62] Adrienne Rich, *What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1994), 250.

the search for justice."[63] Rich could just as easily have been writing about Juana Alicia, whose *The Spiral Word* exemplifies the work of an artist for whom beauty is activism is art is life. How did Juana Alicia's background prepare her for her life's work as a Critical Muralist, and what was the cultural context that inspired that work? Chapter Two presents a brief biography of Juana Alicia, and then describes the history of mural making, in particular Chicano murals in San Francisco's Mission District where Juana Alicia lived and worked in her early career, and which provided much of her artistic and activist context.

JUANA ALICIA'S BIOGRAPHY

Juana Alicia was born in New Jersey to a Jewish mother and a Mexican-American father, and grew up in Detroit, listening to Aretha Franklin and other Motown musicians. She was exposed to the work of Käthe Kollwitz through prints her mother owned, and to the work of her mother's aunt and uncle, Barbara and Alex Stavinitz. When I interviewed Juana Alicia, she told me that the Stavinitzes "were Ashcan School [sic], Depression era printmakers. Kollwitz and the Stavinitzes influenced me profoundly with their strong graphic styles, social critique and emotional appeals."[64] Juana Alicia spent many hours as well viewing Diego Rivera's mural *Detroit Industry*, also known as *Man and Machine,* at the Detroit Art Institute. At Cass Technical High School, she met Dr. Cledie Collins Taylor, who became a godmother to her artistically, and who founded and continues to operate "the first black-owned gallery in Detroit, called Arts Extended. She's a sculptor and a jeweler, and an international emissary for the legacy of

[63] Ibid. 53.
[64] JA/AC.

African American art in the United States."[65] Juana Alicia's mother, Lee R. Franklin, was a labor lawyer who, according to her obituary in the *Detroit Free Press,* fought for the "rights of many types of service workers, from janitors to farm workers to members of the SEIU to AFSCME workers to those who clean the stalls at the racetrack. She defended the disenfranchised and underrepresented, worked for the rights of women and fought to keep abortion legal."[66] Given these role models, it is not surprising that Juana Alicia became an activist artist: as she says, "My mom was involved with the farmworkers – needless to say my mom was a very strong influence on me – she was a social justice advocate."[67]

Perhaps inspired by her mother's example, Juana Alicia also became involved with the United Farm Workers Union, where she met Cesar Chavez when he came to Detroit. She was recruited, as she says "to move to Salinas and work with the Union as a volunteer on their newspaper, *El Malcriado*, and I, in the spirit of the times, after having spent a lot of time in social protest and meetings in high school, going to Black Panther meetings or anti-Vietnam war rallies, lots of similar activities, was very inspired to go work with the UFW! I took a train across Canada, and hitchhiked down the west coast to Salinas, sort of like the Bobbie McGee song by Janis Joplin."[68]

Juana Alicia says that when she arrived in Salinas, California, she found that she was not as interested in working in the union office as she was in

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[65] Ibid.

[66] "Franklin, Lee R., Death Notices", *Detroit Free Press*, and *The Detroit News*, September 10, 2011, accessed December 3, 2013. http://deathnotices.michigan.com /view-single.php?id=276465.

[67] JA/AC.

[68] Ibid.

> working in the fields, and doing labor organizing in the fields, being with my people, the farmworkers, in the fields. I felt more inspired to work with the laborers, the *Mexicanos*, because I had grown up in a more Puerto Rican Spanish speaking environment in Detroit, with lots of Italians and African American people, not that many *Mexicanos* around me. It was very exciting for me to have a sort of re-encounter with my culture, and to be actively organizing in the fields, which is a much more exciting and beautiful place than an office, and ended up working until I was seven months pregnant with my first child.[69]

After her son was born in 1973, Juana Alicia, sickened by toxic pesticides and unable to return to the fields, worked as a bilingual teacher's aide. The first public murals she painted were with migrant students in Salinas and Watsonville, completed after she graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1979 with a B.A. in Teaching Aesthetic Awareness from a Cultural Perspective. By 1983, she had moved to the Mission District in San Francisco, where she made an immediate impact when she painted the mural *Las Lechugueras* on a street corner. *Las Lechugueras,* now destroyed, was a relatively simple albeit powerful mural that reflected Juana Alicia's recent experience as a pregnant farmworker exposed to pesticides, and it is at this point that she emerged as one of the most important muralists in San Francisco, and started the work that would lead to the narrative complexity of *The Spiral Word*.

CHICANO CULTURAL AND MURAL MOVEMENTS

The fields of Salinas where Juana Alicia worked are one of several cradles of the Chicano cultural movement, both politically and artistically. The Farmworkers movement used posters and murals to get its message across and in the process helped solidify the Chicano identity. Rupert Garcia, a prominent Chicano activist artist, writes

[69] JA/AC.

that the Chicano Art Movement deals with

> the concern with Mexican, Indian, and Mexican American histories and traditions; the merging of everyday life, especially the political, and art; the ubiquitous use of the figure and an expressive representationalism; the almost nonresistance of an art for art's sake attitude; Chicano Art diversely and unevenly protested not only against racism, the Vietnam War, sexism, Euro-Anglo ethnocentrism, imperialism, police brutality, drug abuse, gang warfare, and much more, but it also expressed discontent with the U.S. and European Modernist tradition which variously positioned itself against much of the above concerns of the Chicano Art Movement.[70]

The Chicano Mural Movement was perhaps born in the fields where farmworkers labored. In 1968, Antonio Bernal painted the two panels of the Del Rey Mural at Teatro Campesino Cultural Center on the exterior wall of the offices of the now famous theater troupe, El Teatro Campesino. Founded by San José State University alumnus Luis Valdez during the 1965 Delano Grape Strike, El Teatro Campesino performed for the farmworkers from the back of a flatbed truck in the fields where they worked. The first panel of Bernal's mural, which no longer exists, depicted the proud and largely forgotten indigenous heritage of the Chicano people, of which noted historian of Chicano art, Shifra Goldman writes, "Pre-Columbian rulers line up Bonampak-like horizontally, headed by a woman."[71] The second panel portrayed a protest march led by "La Adelita," a female Mexican revolutionary soldier, followed by Emilio Zapata and Pancho Villa. In the middle Cesar Chavez carried the iconic *huelga* (strike) banner with its geometric

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[70] Rupert Garcia, "Prologue: La Cultura Chicana: Voices in Dialogue,"in *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation 1965-1985*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo, et al. (Los Angeles: Wright Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992), 23.

[71] Shifra Goldman, "How, Why, Where, and When It all Happened: Chicano Murals of California," in *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, ed. Eva Sperling Cockroft and Holly Barnet-Sànchez, Social and Public Art Resource Center, Venice California (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 26.

black eagle looking like an inverted Teotihuacano pyramid. In solidarity with the black Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King, Junior and a member of the Black Panther Party brought up the rear.[72]

Bernal's mural was designed to be easily understood by its audience; the simple graphic style assertively broadcast its political message, the content taking precedence over the form. The content educated its audience about and evoked pride in a history ignored by the American mainstream, and the mural itself was not an object to be bought or sold, but freely given to its largely poor viewers. Perhaps most importantly, it was not in a gallery or museum but outside, literally and figuratively, where it could reach its intended audience, the farmworkers who were most decidedly outside of the cultural elite in the United States. Didactic, content driven, recovering history and instilling pride, not marketable, and out in a non-exclusive public space, Bernal's mural was representative of the many Chicano murals that were to come.

THE MURAL MOVEMENT IN SAN FRANCISCO: CHICANO MURALS IN THE MISSION

The San Francisco neighborhood where Juana Alicia found a literal and artistic home was the Mission, a place she fell in love with and which she as she writes she considers "the holy ground on which I have been able to live and thrive as a painter and as an activist."[73] In the 1970s and 1980s the Mission was experiencing a remarkable flourishing of Latino activism, culture and art, most notably in the many hundreds of

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[72] Peter Howard Selz, *Art of Engagement; Visual Politics in California and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 12, 171.

[73] Juana Alicia, "Remembering the Mission: A Reflection", September 20, 2007, accessed October 27, 2013. http://www.juanaalicia.com/content/remembering-the-mission-a-reflection/.

large-scale murals on the streets. Juana Alicia writes that the murals and many other artistic ventures were supported by "the non-profits and grass-roots institutions that have suckled several generations of artists, (and which now) appear utopian. La Galería de la Raza and Studio 24, the Mission Cultural Center, Artists TV Access, the ghost of La Raza Graphics, and many others, although fraught with their contradictions, seem like models for many communities."[74]

THE MURAL RENAISSANCE OF THE 1970s AND 1980s

Street art, including mural art, has a highly visible presence in contemporary urban life and its roots can be traced to the mural renaissance that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was not confined to San Francisco; other cities in the United States notable for their murals include Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and perhaps most importantly Chicago, which is home to what may have been the first community mural, the *Wall of Respect.* Destroyed in 1971, it was painted in 1967 during the Civil Rights movement by William Walker and other artists from the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC). Clearly intended to provoke critical consciousness, it portrayed heroes of the black community and actively sought to counter negative stereotyping of African Americans in the larger culture. *The Wall of Respect* was enormously influential and spawned a whole series of "Walls" in Chicago as well as other cities. During our interview, Juana Alicia acknowledged the debt Chicano artists owe to African American artists.

> Our greatest role models, in both the Mexican and Chicano movements, were really the Harlem Renaissance and subsequently the black Civil Rights and

[74] Ibid.

> cultural renaissance movements of the 1960s and 70s, and beyond. And really, the first bold people's murals in the streets were done in Washington DC, Detroit, (very close to where I grew up), and Chicago. These were the "Walls of Pride", and "Walls of Hope", African American murals. There were many relationships between the Harlem Renaissance, the Mexican Muralism and printmaking movements, and other international liberation movements. This included support of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and anti-colonial resistance in Africa and Latin America. Black people and Latino people in the U.S., in Mexico and in other places, formed great alliances and blazed trails for each other, back and forth, traveling switchbacks and reinventing the social vision of many marginalized sectors. When I came of age African American people really were the vanguard, of both the mural movement of the Harlem Renaissance and then the Mexican mural movement, for the Chicano mural movement. The black revolutionary spirit of the 1960s was a tremendous example; there were the Black Panthers, and the Brown Berets, the Puerto Rican rights movement, of the East Coast and Puerto Rico. All of those movements were intertwined, and very important for each other.[75]

California has a particularly vibrant mural tradition, not surprisingly linked to the emerging Chicano activism of the 1960s and 1970s. The murals of Los Angeles and San Francisco tended to be content-driven, political, and sometimes collectively created. As Rupert Garcia points out, the nature of the Chicano community in particular is more collective in spirit and views art as a part of life - art for life's sake, rather than art for art's sake.[76]

SAN FRANCISCO MURALS: BALMY ALLEY

Timothy Drescher, who chronicles community murals, writes, "Because of its ethnic diversity, small geographical area, the proximity of Mexican and New Deal models, and most of all its concentration of skilled, creative, and prolific artists, San Francisco

[75] JA/AC.
[76] Garcia, "Prologue: La Cultura Chicana: Voices in Dialogue," 23.

became one of the leading mural centers of the world."[77] Several factors distinguish Bay Area mural art from that found in other urban areas, one of which is the sheer number of murals, hundreds of which are clustered in a relatively small area of San Francisco. The Mission district is the heart of this mural movement, and it is home to one of the highest concentrations of street art anywhere.[78] Precita Eyes Mural Arts and Visitor Center publishes a map of the Mission District murals that lists ninety-two separate murals, including two important mural clusters: Balmy Alley, which has at least thirty murals, and Clarion Alley, with many more. Not included in the Precita Eyes map are two more recent mural clusters in the Mission which are located in Cypress Alley and Lilac Alley, and feature many more murals, most of which are done with spray-paint and/or stencils and present a distinctly contemporary "street art" feel.

In 1972 the women's collective, Mujeres Muralistas, painted the first murals in Balmy Alley between 24th and 25th Streets in a part of the Mission that was heavily Latino at that time. Over the next ten years several more murals were added until 1984 when Ray Patlan, who had relocated from Chicago where he had been an active participant in the community mural movement, gathered a large group of mural activists together. Drescher writes that Patlan "proposed a joint project in which each garage door or fence segment would have a mural painted on it. They would be linked by dual themes: the celebration of indigenous Central American cultures and/or protest against U. S. intervention in Central America. The organizational rubric for Balmy was *Placa*, which

[77] Timothy W. Drescher, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Community Creates Its Muse* (San Francisco: Pogo Press, 1991), 14.
[78] Ibid. 7.

in Spanish refers to the tag, or mark by taggers. It is an assertion of self and group."[79] The main focus of the Balmy Alley murals is political; the subject matter includes Latino indigenous culture, local issues, and especially during the 1980s, murals protesting the United States' involvement in the many devastating civil wars in Central America. Included among these murals were two painted by Juana Alicia, her 1985 *Te Oimos Guatemala/We Hear You Guatemala*, which was damaged by the elements and was replaced in 1996 by her portrait of slain Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero,[80] *Una Ley Immoral*.

The murals in Balmy Alley were painted by many artists over several decades, and like much Chicano and activist art, they are content driven and tend to draw on the tradition of Social Realist art, particularly that of the Mexican Muralists. Consciousness-raising is an important element of activist art, making clear communication of content a primary function of politically driven community murals, and thus making Social Realism an effective style.

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[79] Drescher, "Street Subversion: The Political Geography of Murals and Graffiti" in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. James Brook, et al. (San Francisco: City Lights books, 1998), 235.

[80] Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated while conducting mass during El Salvador's bloody civil war. A hero and martyr of the liberation theology movement, he was a strong voice against the U. S. backed military dictatorship. In his last sermon he addressed soldiers who were being asked to kill their fellow citizens; "No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God. No one has to obey an immoral law. It is high time you recovered your consciences and obeyed your consciences rather than a sinful order." His image became iconic in the mural movement of the 1980s, and many people, especially the poor, have come to regard him as a saint. He is in fact one step "closer to sainthood" having been beatified by Pope Francis on May 23, 2015. Gustavo Valdes, Merlin Delcid, and Mariano Castillo, "Martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero closer to sainthood", CNN, May 23, 2015, accessed July 11, 2015. http://www.cnn.com /2015/05/23/americas/el-salvador-archbishop-oscar-romero-beatification/.

THE HISTORY OF MURALS IN SAN FRANCISCO

The concentration of murals on the walls of Balmy and Clarion Alleys and indeed all of the Mission District exists in part because of their location in San Francisco, a city known for the vibrancy of its mural movement. According to Art Historian Peter Selz there are many reasons for this, but one is that

> San Francisco has a particularly strong history of political mural production, beginning with the projects sponsored by the WPA in the 30s, notably the Coit Tower frescos, which caused considerable controversy for their alleged Communist innuendos. The arrival in that decade of the Mexican muralists known as Los Tres Grandes – Diego Rivera in SF, and José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros in Los Angeles left a lasting legacy. When mural art experienced a resurgence in the early 70s, many artists turned to Los Tres Grandes for inspiration, positioning themselves in the populist traditions of the Mexicans.[81]

The Coit Tower murals were among the first mural projects of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal administration. Approximately twenty-seven leading California artists participated in their creation, (several of them women), working in the Social Realist style. This mural cycle created controversy among conservative politicians who wanted the murals destroyed because they included several Communist references. In *Hobos to Street People,* Art Hazelwood writes, "The San Francisco Chronicle [sic] branded them 'red propaganda.' At the same time the dockworkers went on strike on the waterfront. Artists in San Francisco supported the waterfront workers when they went on strike against low wages, long hours and terrible working conditions."[82] Hazelwood goes on to write,

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[81] Selz, *Art of Engagement; Visual Politics in California and Beyond*, 12.

[82] Art Hazelwood, afterword by Paul Boden. *Hobos to Street People: Artist's Responses to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present* (San Francisco: Freedom Voices, 2001), 16.

> Increasingly, artists began to realize their interests lay with the working class. They began to reinterpret their roles as artists, sought to build solidarity with working people, to explicitly criticize capitalism, and to make art available to all people. In the 1930s, this was all new and powerfully-felt and most importantly, put into practice.[83]

THE IMPACT OF DIEGO RIVERA ON SAN FRANCISCO

Although each of Los Tres Grandes inspired the mural artists of the 1970s, Diego Rivera had a particularly significant impact on the mural arts in San Francisco because of his presence there while painting four murals during the 1930s. The first of these, *Allegory of California*, was painted during 1930-1931 at the City Club in the Pacific Stock Exchange building. *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* was painted in 1931 at the San Francisco Art Institute (then the California School of Fine Arts.) *Still Life and Blossoming Almond Trees*, also painted in 1931, was commissioned by Rosalie Meyer Stern for her home, and now resides in Stern Hall on the University of California, Berkeley campus.

The fourth, and arguably the most important mural Rivera painted in San Francisco, was painted during the Golden Gate International Exhibition of 1939 in the Art-in-Action Pavilion, a huge warehouse-like space filled with other working artists, in front of a paying public. Rivera's enormous 22' X 77' fresco, entitled *The Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and of the South on this Continent,* more commonly referred to as *Pan American Unity*, required the help of many assistants, and took two years to paint. During this two-year period, Rivera lived in San Francisco, making his presence felt socially as well as artistically. On December 8, 1940, in a San Francisco courtroom, he

[83] Ibid. 17.

married artist Frida Kahlo for the second time, and her temporary residence in San Francisco also had a long-lasting impact; as a Mexican woman artist she became a role model for Chicana artists in the 1970s, an inspiration that continues to this day. Her image, wearing a Tehuana skirt and blouse, is featured prominently in *Pan American Unity*. The mural also includes a huge image of the Aztec sculpture of the goddess Coatlicue morphing into a machine, an image Rivera had already used in his 1933 murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

The inclusion of Aztec imagery was significant; Rivera both studied and collected Mesoamerican artifacts, and his foregrounding this forgotten and undervalued culture in his murals gave it a highly visible presence in modern mainstream art, inspiring later Chicano artists with great pride in their culture. *Pan American Unity* was painted on ten panels with the intent that it be moved and permanently installed in the library at City College of San Francisco, but it languished in a warehouse until 1961 when the mural was finally placed in the lobby of the college theater, where it continues to educate and inspire.[84]

EMMY LOU PACKARD, LUCIENNE BLOCH, AND STEPHEN DIMITROFF AS LINKS TO TRADITIONAL MURAL ARTS

After the completion of *Pan American Unity*, many of Rivera's assistants, some of whom had been hired by the PWAP to paint the earlier Coit Tower murals, continued to

[84] Although the theater lobby is not the best viewing location for such a treasure, it is open and free to the public, and the college provides a pamphlet as a guide for the complex iconography in the mural. The day I visited, the lobby was full of local school children who were being taught in Spanish about the mural by their young male teacher.

live and work in the San Francisco Bay Area, and taught the next generation of mural artists. Among them was Emmy Lou Packard, who went on to have a distinguished career as a printmaker, and who was deeply committed to social justice and peace activism.[85] In her later years, she lived in the Mission district where she was a friend of Juana Alicia and her first husband, Emmanuel Montoya, and was an important link to traditional mural arts.[86] Juana Alicia says of Emmy Lou Packard;

> She was part of that same connection between the generations, for me, and my generation. I knew Emmy and loved her. The last time I saw Emmy Lou Packard, I was painting the mural at Cesar Chavez elementary school, and I went to get a burrito or something, and I saw her on the street, and she had a little handbag, and gloves, and she was all fixed up, and she was going out, and I said 'Emmy, where are you going?' and she said (whispers) 'I'm going downtown to shop, I'm going to Macy's and Nordstrom's, don't tell anybody.' She was at the old folks home right there at 23rd and Van Ness, and she had gotten out somehow, and she was going shopping (laughs). That was the last time I saw her.[87]

Rivera's assistants Stephen Dimitroff and Lucienne Bloch did not work on *Pan American Unity*, but they had worked on Rivera's murals in Detroit and the infamously destroyed mural, *Man at the Crossroads*, at Rockefeller Center in New York. Eventually they moved to Mill Valley, California, where Dimitroff set up a frame shop.

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[85] As a child, well before I had heard of Rivera, I was introduced to the prints of Emmy Lou Packard through peace activist friends of my mother. I remember vividly her iconic linocut poster, *Peace is a Human Right*, featuring three children, one holding a dove, kneeling by a sunflower, which was created as a protest against the Vietnam War. Today one of my most treasured possessions is an original Emmy Lou Packard woodcut print of logging in Mendocino, inherited from one of those peacenik friends of my mother.

[86] On November 19, 2013, I visited Precita Eyes Mural Arts and Visitor Center on 24th Street in the Mission. In the very back of the storefront was a Day of the Dead altar that included the images of Emmy Lou Packard, Lucienne Bloch, Stephen Dimitroff, Diego Rivera, and other departed mural luminaries such as John Biggers, and of course, Frida Kahlo.

[87] JA/AC

There both Bloch and Dimitroff taught art classes until they moved to Gualala on the Northern California coast, where they continued to teach the art and craft of fresco.

Juana Alicia's work can, in part, trace its artistic lineage in a direct line to Diego Rivera, both stylistically through his example as one of the Mexican Muralists painting content-driven murals, and because she was a student of Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff. Of the best-known Mexican muralists, Los Tres Grandes, Juana Alicia says

> They took Pre-Columbian art, and I include Frida Kahlo in this, and there are many others, took Pre-Columbian art off the trash heap of history, and brought a sense of *Mexicanismo* and identity, a national, indigenous, and *mestizo* identity into the cultural mainstream of Mexican art. I have to say that of all three of them – I don't know if I could pick a favorite, but Orozco was I think the clearest predictor of the future and the human dilemma that we're now facing, in terms of the destruction of the planet. He was the most future thinking of the muralists. Siqueiros was an incredible innovator, an inventor with pyroxylin, and a forerunner with acrylic paint, and spraying, and jumping off the wall with sculptural forms; and of course Rivera was an inimitable draughtsman, and he had an imagination for history, and reconstruction of history which is what he did with his murals in a way that may or may not have ever existed, that was awesome. So all of them were incredibly great models for myself and many other Chicano/Latino women artists, particularly Frida Kahlo had a profound impact on my work.[88]

After teaching for years in various institutions, many as a visiting lecturer, and feeling as if she was not getting paid enough, Juana Alicia returned to school and earned her MFA in 1990 at the San Francisco Art Institute, focusing her masters thesis on fresco painting. As part of her thesis research, she stayed with Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff in Gualala. She told me she first met them when

> they came down to San Francisco to do some fresco workshops with a lot of us community muralists, Miranda Bergman, O'Brian Thiele, Ray Patlan, Jane Norling, Arch Williams, Osha Newman, Eduardo Pinero I think was there, -

[88] Ibid.

> we had quite a clutch of artists that wanted to take fresco workshops with them, they were legendary at that time, in the 80s. And I just totally fell in love with them, they were so funny, and told endless anecdotes about Diego and Frida, and their relationship, and their relationship as a couple and their relationship as a quartet, in different configurations, and their experience at Rockefeller Center; Lucienne was the only person who documented the murals demise – she had a little Leica camera in her overalls, and when the mural crew was being arrested she took a freight elevator, a construction elevator up in front of the mural, by the front doors, and shot the only existing pictures of the mural, black and white pictures of the mural, before it was destroyed. And they had so many great stories, like Lucienne when she had her children and they were toddlers, let them run around the house and she sat in the *coralito*, the playpen, and drew in there, that was the only way she could get to do her work, she'd get in the playpen. And they were so funny and brilliant, and wonderful and just delightful to be around. They lent me their paint pots that had been Diego's, and I guess I mentioned that once in front of Lucienne's grandson, and he's been hounding me for them ever since, but I don't know where they are, I don't know if I gave them back, or whatever, maybe they're somewhere in my basement and I can't find them.[89]

SAN FRANCISCO IN THE SIXTIES

After Diego Rivera left San Francisco in 1940, left-leaning mural art was dormant for a period, as Anthony W. Lee explains in his exhaustive study, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals*.

> The possibility for art to express the radicals' dissent, however, disappeared when the United States entered World War II. The intense nationalism that drove the American War machine and a strong sense of shared effort made dissent suspect, however it was expressed. The pressure for political conformity and orthodoxy that prevailed during the war continued into the 1950s with congressional committees hunting down Communists. The fate of radical public mural painting was sealed.[90]

Dissent in California had not disappeared entirely however; it merely went underground, erupting wildly again in the 1960s when California was at the forefront of

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[89] JA/AC

[90] Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 216.

political engagement. The 1964 Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley galvanized student activism everywhere, inspiring Civil Rights marches and anti-Vietnam War protests. Eighteen year olds did not have the right to vote but could be drafted, and young men of color were disproportionately sent to Vietnam. The Civil Rights Movement, Peace Movement, Free Speech Movement, the Black Panthers of Oakland, gay pride, the American Indian Movement on Alcatraz, the student strike at San Francisco State University, all had an impact on the arts. The cultures of resistance emerged on the West Coast first because the counterculture of the 1950s, especially the Beat poets, had been centered in San Francisco where Lawrence Ferlinghetti published Allan Ginsburg's ground-breaking poem, *Howl*. Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books in North Beach became a gathering place for many left-leaning writers and thinkers.

On San Francisco's Haight Street in the 1960s, the counterculture burst into wildly saturated flower created by the hippies and their psychedelic art. Brilliant silkscreened posters, many advertising rock shows at local venues such as the Avalon Ballroom and the Fillmore Auditorium, used vibrating complementary color schemes to attract an audience, and became instantly collectable. Although by no means the only place where psychedelic art was happening, San Francisco was one of the epicenters of this movement, and many notable local artists like Stanley Mouse, Alton Kelley, Victor Mocoso, and Wes Wilson had their posters plastered all over the city. The bold graphics and intensely saturated colors helped provide a fertile context for mural art.[91]

The explosion of poster art in the 1960s was political as well as psychedelic, and the

[91] James Henke and Parke Puterbaugh, eds., *I Want to Take You Higher: The Psychedelic Era 1965-1969* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997), 101.

strongest political poster movement was within the Chicano movement, where the poster was an integral tool for political action and began to inform larger-scale Chicano murals. In particular, the many political posters that El Teatro Campesino and the Chicano Labor Movement created had an impact on the mural renaissance in the Bay Area; the *huelga* eagle and images of César Chavez became ubiquitous and iconic motifs in early murals.

Two Chicano graphic artists, Malaquias Montoya and Rupert Garcia, created political posters that provided inspirational material for mural art. Malaquias Montoya of Oakland, who is a deeply political artist, states "[as] a Chicano artist I feel a responsibility that all my art should be a reflection of my political beliefs - an art of protest. The struggle of all people cannot be merely intellectually accepted. It must become part of our very being as artists, otherwise we cannot give expression to it in our work."[92] Rupert Garcia's artistic career began when he created posters during the 1968 student strike at San Francisco State. One of these, *Right On!,* depicts the revolutionary hero Che Guevara, and was one of the first popular images to appropriate the iconic photograph by Alberto Korda. Garcia went on to become one of the founding members of Galería de la Raza, which in the 1970s held an important exhibit of Frida Kahlo's paintings that helped spark the current revival of interest in her work. His 1975 screen print portrait of Frida Kahlo inspired other Chicana and Chicano artists to pay homage to the Mexican artist as a symbol of cultural pride. Garcia's *¡Cesen Deportación!, created in 1973,* is stunningly prescient of today's immigration issues.[93]

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[92] Malaquias Montoya, "Artist's Statement," accessed December 3, 2013. http://www.malaquiasmontoya.com/statement.php.

[93] Robert Flynn Johnson, "The Composition of Conscience," in *Rupert Garcia,*

In San Francisco, mural painting flourished in the Mission district in part because of the women's art collective Mujeres Muralistas, organized in the early 1970s, and its example encouraged other women to take up the brush in a more public way. The four original women, Patricia Rodríguez, Irene Pérez (who would go on to work with Juana Alicia on the Women's Building mural,) Graciela Carrillo, and Consuelo Mèndez, painted *Latinoamérica,* which depicted plants, animals and the traditional cultures of Venezuela, Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru. Although feminism had begun to take hold in the 1970s, it had not reached many leftist movements, some of which were decidedly macho in attitude, including the *murlasimo* of the Mission. According to Shifra Goldman, "The *Mujeres*' murals were challenged in the community for being apolitical; however they had decided that the men's murals of the time had too much 'blood and guts' and they wanted a more positive image of their culture."[94] Prominent mural artist Ray Patlan recounts how he came around and "really began to understand how the Mujeres Muralistas were such an important aspect of the mural movement. Their art made a difference in the way people looked at murals, the way artists looked at each other, and the way men looked at women."[95]

The Mujeres Muralistas paved the way for other Chicanas to work in a field often

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Prints and Posters 1967-1990. (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1990), 9 – 11.

[94] Shifra M. Goldman, "How, Why, What, When, and Where it all Happened: Chicano Murals of California", in *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, ed. Eva Sperling Cockroft and Holly Barnet-Sànchez, Social and Public Art Resource Center, Venice California (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 40.

[95] Ray Patlan, quoted by Jaime Cortez in "Beauty is the Verb: Mission Muralismo 1971-1982" in *Street Art San Francisco; Mission Muralismo*, ed. Annice Jacoby (New York, Abrams, 2009), 59.

dominated by men; they created fertile ground for the many women artists who flourished in the Mission, contributing greatly to the plethora of murals there. When Juana Alicia arrived in the early 1980s, she further expanded on the theme of women as a powerful political force. In describing *La Promisa de Loma Prieta: Que no se repita la historia/ The Promise of Loma Prieta: That History Not Repeat Itself*, a mural Juana Alicia painted in 1992 at U. C. Santa Cruz, Angela Davis writes,

> Women dominate this utopian California landscape, some recognizable – Maxine Hong Kingston, Ginny Lim, Dolores Huerta – and other anonymous participants in the social movements of this region. In inserting her own image into the mural, together with artists like Frida Kahlo, Juana Alicia gives women artists a central place and transformative role.[96]

Other factors in the Mission that encouraged the growth of the mural scene were groups like Galería de la Raza, which was founded in 1970 as a community based arts organization that supports Chicano/Latino arts of all kinds. According to their website they organized the first community mural program in the United States, and Juana Alicia gives Galería de la Raza credit for supporting her mural work in the Mission. Another important organization in the Mission is Precita Eyes, founded in 1977 specifically as a community mural center, by Luis and Susan Cervantes (another collaborator with Juana Alicia on several murals including the Women's building.) The Precita Eyes website[97] states that it is one of three community mural centers in the United States; presumably the other two are SPARC in Los Angeles and the Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia.

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[96] Angela Davis, "Other Landscapes" in *Art/Women/California: Parallels and Intersections 1950 – 2000*, ed. Diana Burgess Fuller and Daniela Salvioni (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 45 – 49.

[97] "Mission Statement," Precita Eyes, accessed February 19, 2016. http://www.precitaeyes.org/about.html

THE FATE OF THE MISSION: JUANA ALICIA IN EXILE

Although there is still an active street art scene in the Mission, the neighborhood has undergone a radical transformation as young, wealthy tech workers have moved in because it has become a "hip" place to live, in part because of its colorful murals. This process of gentrification has displaced many of the poorer residents, among them the very artists who helped create such a vibrant neighborhood. As Juana Alicia notes;

> One of the greatest ironies after the completion of the *MaestraPeace* project was the fact that I could no longer afford to live in San Francisco. I had raised my son there until the late 1980′s, but by the time my daughter was born, gentrification and the dot.com boom had impacted the economy to such a degree that I could no longer afford to pay my rent or other expenses at City prices. I moved to Berkeley in 1995 but continued my long-distance love affair with the Mission.[98]

In 2012, Juana Alicia's husband, Tirso Araiza, painted a mural entitled *Mission Makeover* in Balmy Alley with Lucia Ippolito, which depicts the effects of gentrification on the poorer residents of the Mission, and includes a bitterly humorous appropriation of Masaccio's *Expulsion from Paradise*.

Although the Mission is no longer her literal home, Juana Alicia continues to practice the art and activism she refined there. Her community has simply grown larger, and now includes the East Bay where she directs the True Colors Mural Project through her Mural Design and Creation class at Berkeley City College. Recent True Colors Mural Projects include work on a ceramic tile mural for the West Oakland Youth Center in collaboration with the Trust Your Struggle Mural Collective, and a mural to be completed in 2016 entitled *From Incarceration to Liberation*, in collaboration with San Francisco State's

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[98] Juana Alicia, "Remembering the Mission: A Reflection," accessed October 27, 2013. http://www.juanaalicia.com/content/remembering-the-mission-a-reflection/

PROJECT REBOUND[99].

The Spiral Word at Stanford is a continuation of Juana Alicia's work in the Mission in both its content and intent. Although it differs from her earlier murals in its media (digital print and paint, attached to the wall like wallpaper, rather than painted directly onto the wall), and its location inside rather than on the street, Juana Alicia's intent is nonetheless to have the mural function as a means of critical pedagogy, if for a smaller self-selected audience. The intended viewers of *The Spiral Word* are primarily the Latino students who attend Stanford, and the mural is meant to evoke pride in in their culture, but also to raise consciousness about past and present issues faced by Latinos. Juana Alicia feels that it is particularly important that a culturally elite institution such as Stanford University provide a safe and welcoming space for Latino students, who are still very much in the minority there,[100] by reflecting their culture rather than the dominant one, by educating them about Latin American literature and history, and by hopefully modeling an alternative, positive image of a possible future. The ultimate intent of *The Spiral Word* is to encourage, as Juana Alicia says "the leaders of another vision."[101]

Juana Alicia has long worked as a teacher as well as a critical muralist, and in her role as an educator is very actively engaged with, and deeply invested in passing the torch on to the next generation of artist activists. Chapter Three will examine the role of critical

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[99] True Colors Mural Project, accessed February 19, 2016. https://truecolorsmuralproject.wordpress.com/about/

[100] According to the Stanford Diversity and Access Office, in 2015 Latinos made up 4% of the faculty, 12.6 % of undergraduates, and 6% of graduate students. Stanford University, accessed March 11, 2016. https://diversityandaccess.stanford.edu /diversity/diversity-facts

[101] JA/AC.

pedagogy in Juana Alicia's work as a muralist, discussing several of her murals as a reflection of her role as a critical muralist.

CHAPTER THREE:
JUANA ALICIA'S ART AS A REFLECTION OF HER ACTVIST IDENTITY

CRITICAL MURALISM

> I am a muralist, printmaker, educator, activist and painter who loves to draw. I feel that it is my responsibility as an artist to be an activist for social justice, human rights and environmental health, and I see the work of parenting and teaching akin to being an artist. I have been teaching for thirty years, working in many areas of education, from community organizing to migrant and bilingual education to arts education, from kindergarten to graduate school levels.
>
> - Juana Alicia's artist statement.[102]

Writer and activist Arundhati Roy says that once something is seen, "you cannot unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing becomes as political an act as speaking out. There's no innocence. Either way, you're accountable."[103] Artists are inherently visual people, and so perhaps see more than other people, but they are also citizens. Juana Alicia's work exemplifies this duality: as a citizen, as an activist, and as an artist she has used her work to educate people about social and environmental injustices, both past and present, in an effort to inspire action. Although activist art frequently takes radical or innovative forms, Juana Alicia uses a traditional form, figurative murals, to bring her activism to a wide audience outside of the institutions of art and academia. This type of mural is what Arturo Rosette in his doctoral dissertation[104] refers to as "critical muralism," murals that are collaborative and community based, and the artists who create them are "community-educator-artist-leader-

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[102] Juana Alicia, "About/Biografia." *juanaalicia.com*, accessed March 11, 2016. http://www.juanaalicia.com/about/.

[103] Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2001), 7.

[104] Rosette, "Critical Muralism."

activists."[105] In this chapter, I argue that Juana Alicia's murals, especially her most recent work, use content-driven, didactic forms to carry their complex and critical messages to educate and instill cultural pride, thereby ensuring that they function as viable forms of art as critical consciousness raising.

DEFINING ACTIVIST ART

To begin, Juana Alicia's commitment to activism is crucial to understanding her art; she sees beyond the glossy surface of the mainstream to injustices that might be forgotten, and then uses her paintbrush to speak out and educate people about what she has seen. In "Trojan Horses,"[106] internationally known art historian and activist Lucy Lippard argues that when people become involved in activist art, they can do something about what they see. Lippard describes three types of activist artists: first, experimental or avant-garde artists working in the mainstream art world, a category that Juana Alicia's work emphatically does not belong in, being neither avant-garde nor in the mainstream art world. Lippard's second category includes progressive artists who work together or within political organizations, both within and outside of mainstream art. This second category could include Juana Alicia, who is a political progressive allied with many leftist causes, although her work is not necessarily affiliated with specific political organizations. The third category Lippard describes consists of community artists working mostly outside the art world with grass roots groups, which is the category that

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Lucy Lippard, "Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power", in *Art Theory and Criticism an Anthology of Formalist Avant-Garde, Contextualist, and Post-Modernist Thought,* ed. Sally Everett (North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, 1991), 186 – 190.

Juana Alicia fits most easily into; the Women's Building project and the True Colors Mural Project discussed in this chapter are both good examples of this type of community based activist art. All types of activist artists create artworks that Lippard says have the power to affect how people see the world around them. She argues for the idea of cultural democracy: a critique of the dominant corporate culture of "high art" that has historically excluded women and other so-called minorities, and art that does not fit into narrow, Western, male definitions of what constitutes "important" art. Cultural democracy insists that it is the right of all people to be exposed to the highest diversity of artists and artwork, and that *all* artworks be viewed as valid forms of expression.

Lippard is not the only writer to argue for the expansion of cultural democracy in the art world. In *Toward a Peoples Art*, written in 1977, Eva and James Cockroft and John Weber discuss the roots of the current activist art scene in the art world:

> Those unwilling to choose between art and activism or to reconcile themselves to a schizophrenic existence in which their art and their politics had to remain totally distinct came to question the basic assumptions of the avant-garde ideology and practices as such. For many artists, this led to an analysis of the role of art and the artist in a bourgeois society. A new awareness of the ideological role of abstract art and its relationship to the existing social structure came to the fore simultaneously with the questioning of 'objectivity' and the alleged 'end of ideology' in other contexts. As 'value-free' social science was seen to epitomize white male values, so too 'value-free' art was recognized as containing certain values and an ideology of its own.[107]

The forms that activist art takes are extraordinarily varied, but have in common that they are always public, often trying to be so in the broadest possible sense. Another

[107] Eva S. Cockroft, James D. Cockroft, and John Weber, *Towards a Peoples Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1977), 22.

tendency in activist art is that it is anti-commodity; art that is available to all and cannot be bought or sold. It may be process-oriented, particularly in community-based activist art that can involve meetings, education, postering, graphic design, publishing, broadcasting, organizing, filmmaking, etc. Much activist art is collaborative and/or participatory, and its meaning is derived directly from its value to a particular community. In her discussion of what constitutes activist art, Lippard points out that activist art must emphasize clarity of meaning and communication, but should not be simplistic. What may be simplistic or stereotyped to one audience, however, may be deeply meaningful to an audience more involved in its specific issues. Therefore, as artist and activist Steven Durland writes, activist art is inherently about content as the best means of delivering a critical pedagogy. "The savvy artist knew that if your form alienated the public, your message did not get through. So the form got more conservative as the content got more radical."[108] Although this statement may not be entirely accurate, since an activist artwork may be subversive *because* its form is radically innovative, Durland's argument is valid when it comes to critical muralism. Juana Alicia's *The Spiral Word* embodies Durland's assertion; the mural unquestionably uses a content-rich form to convey its radical didactic message.

Juana Alicia's use of the public mural is deeply rooted in the same conceptualizations of activist art that San Francisco artist Art Hazelwood holds. Hazelwood passionately believes in the power of art to change society – activist artists organize, advocate, build

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[108] Steven Durland, introduction to *20 years of Art in the Public Arena: the Citizen Artist, an Anthology from High Performance Magazine 1978-1998*. (Gardiner, New York: Critical Press, 1998.) xxii.

solidarity movements, and retain and/or reclaim a history that is often suppressed by the mainstream.

> Art never affects the world in a vacuum. It exists as a part of culture. Political art standing against repressive forces in society is part of the culture of change. Political art affects the real world as part of the force that keeps the human spirit alive. It keeps the flame of justice burning. It keeps memory alive. It moves with the struggles and moves the struggles forward.[109]

A writer as well as an artist, Hazelwood recently created a poster advocating for the Homeless Bill of Rights, that as of 2015 was moving through the California State Assembly.

The forms activist art can take are varied and multidisciplinary, and can blur the lines between objects, performance, political activism, and investigative journalism, none of which fit neatly into galleries and museums. Murals and posters are classic forms of activist art, both with a long tradition. Many other forms exist, including documentary filmmaking and photography, comics, illustrated books, guerilla theater, puppets, such as the iconic giant puppets created and still performed by the Bread and Puppet Theater, demonstrations, anything that is highly visible. The media are evolving as technology evolves; the cell phone camera and social media are perhaps the newest forms of activist art, broadcasting events as they happen.

MURALS AS DEMOCRATIC ACTIVIST ART

David Conrad and Alan Barnett argue, however, that

> Murals may be the most democratic art that the United States has ever produced. Murals giving voice to ordinary people's concerns are not a 'fine art' thrust on

[109] Paul Boden with Art Hazelwood, "Art and Activism: 1930s and Today", *Huffpost Arts and Culture*, December 7, 2011, accessed November 12, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-boden/art-activism-1930s-today_b_1098260.html.

> people by others, but an art that is accessible to all, that relates to current or historical events or experiences, and that expresses deeply felt aspirations or visions of the future. They stimulate community pride and commitment to justice while teaching outsiders about the struggles of traditionally oppressed people. Community murals educate on many levels.[110]

Alan Barnett asserts that community murals challenge the social and political establishment, and give ordinary people artistic content that is frequently denied them by a cultural elite or imposed upon them by corporate public art. The fact that community murals are by nature collaborative and participatory, site-specific, and cannot be sold as an art world commodity, make them different from privately practiced market-driven art.[111] Eva Sperling-Cockroft and Holly Barnett-Sanchez also argue that "community participation, the placement of the murals on exterior walls in the community itself, and the philosophy of community input, that it is the right of a community to decide on what kind of art it wants, characterized the new muralism."[112]

In his introduction to *Art and Activism in the Age of Globalization,* Leivan de Cauter defines "subversity" as a disruptive attitude that tries to create openings in a system, undermine rigid dogma and authority, create cultural activism, and calls for an overthrow of the aesthetic canon. However, he says that the time of aesthetic subversion is over, there are no more artistic conventions to attack, and so artistic subversion is now frivolous, (one has only to think of Damien Hirst, whose artworks seem subversive

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[110] David Conrad, "Community Murals as Democratic Art and Education" in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1995), 98-102 Published by: University of Illinois Press, 98.

[111] Alan Barnett, *Community Murals: the Peoples Art* (London & New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1984), 17.

[112] Eva Sperling Cockroft and Holly Barnett-Sanchez, *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (Alberquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 9-10.

purely based on shock value, but on closer examination lack a rigorous moral underpinning.) De Cauter calls for a new commitment from artists to get rid of romantic notions about subversion; he maintains that subversion can be a destructive force and declares it is time for positive protest; artists and intellectuals must put their theories into practice, and take real action by defending international rule of law, defending the right of activists and ordinary citizens to speak freely, and defending ecological measures. "It is the rise of the new mode of capitalism and the disintegration of the social along with the shadow of ecological disaster that has changed the game. Artists and intellectuals have to change gear and turn the tables in response: from the spirit of negation to a practice of affirmative civic protest, in short, from subversion to activism."[113]

Many activist artists are in fact working for positive change using their art as political tools; activist artists understand that they are citizens of their communities and of the world, and that not taking a political stand, not speaking out through their art, as Arundhati Roy says, makes as strong a political statement as taking action does. Community murals in particular have been doing just that for the last fifty years. In her preface to *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, mural artist and activist Judith Baca asserts that she and other artists "joined with young Chicanos and Chicanas to transform public spaces to reflect the people who used them. We believe that positive gains can be achieved by making educational cultural affirmation available to every one, especially to those communities or segments of our society which do not generally

[113] Lievan De Cauter, "Introduction: Excavating Subversion" in *Art and Activism in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Lievan De Cauter, et al. (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2011), 16.

receive positive image reinforcements through the media and elsewhere."[114] Baca's statement certainly applies to Juana Alicia's work, including *The Spiral Word* at Stanford. Although located inside a powerful and elite institution, the mural makes "educational cultural affirmation available" to the minority of Latino students who see themselves reflected in the space of El Centro Chicano y Latino, if not elsewhere on the vast and intimidating Stanford campus.

JUANA ALICIA AS AN ACTIVIST ARTIST AND CRITICAL MURALIST

The core of Juana Alicia's artist statement asserts that it is her "responsibility as an artist to be an activist for social justice, human rights, and environmental health." This statement is the foundation of virtually all of her mural work, which although colorful and visually striking, is powerfully content driven. Many hours of research go into the iconography of each mural, since educating the audience is a core principal of activist art and critical muralism in particular. Juana Alicia has created over thirty solo and collective murals, too many individual murals to consider in this thesis. The following is a discussion of a select few of her murals that particularly emphasize critical pedagogy as a key component.

Juana Alicia writes that Chicano murals have expanded thematically from the struggles of farmworkers and issues particular to Chicanos to include

> international liberation movements in Central America, South America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. We have also fought forces inside and outside our own communities, with people of many colors battling to be included in the women's movement, or represented in the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender

[114] Judith F. Baca, "Preface", *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals*, ed. Eva Sperling Cockroft and Holly Barnet-Sànchez (Alberquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 2.

> community. Through our large-scale murals, we can tell these stories, little seen histories of women and people of color that run counter to the mainstream images and stereotypes that advertising and mass media promote.[115]

LAS LECHUGURERAS/THE WOMEN LETTUCE WORKERS

The first mural Juana Alicia painted in San Francisco's Mission district was specifically about the Chicano/a farmworker experience. *Las Lechugueras/The Women Lettuce Workers*, was painted in 1983 at the corner of York and 24th streets. (Now destroyed and replaced by her 2004 mural, *La Llorona*.) It directly reflects Juana Alicia's experiences as a farm worker and organizer for the United Farm Workers, and addresses issues that face female (and male) workers in the lettuce fields of Salinas; poor working conditions, and the use of pesticides which harm the health of the workers, the environment, and, as the main image in the mural makes explicitly clear, the unborn children of pregnant workers. The monumental figure of a woman working in the fields is shown being sprayed with pesticides from an airplane, while her baby is revealed x-ray style in her round womb. In this image Juana Alicia addresses concerns of social and environmental justice, as well as women's issues that had not been depicted in earlier Chicano murals that were largely centered on men. As Tim Reed writes in *The Art of Protest* "The mural powerfully supports efforts by the farmworker's union to limit the use of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals that harm farmworkers."[116]

It was a powerful and visually arresting image, and partly because of its perceived

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[115] Juana Alicia, "Picture Peace," in *Stop the Next War Now: Effective Responses to violence and Terrorism*, ed. Medea Benjamin and Jodie Evans (Hawaii: Inner Ocean Publishing, Inc. 2005), 211.

[116] T. V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism From the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 122.

feminist, pro-labor, pro-immigrant, and even its very prescient inclusion of an anti-big agribusiness message, it has perhaps been written about more frequently than any of Juana Alicia's other works. Dyan Mazurana discusses the impact of *Las Lechugueras* in a lengthy article:

> Juana Alicia strategically and metaphorically uses the public space of the mural to foreground events that are often feminized and privatized and thus obscured. Juana Alicia's use of intimate signs in this public space allows her to enlarge her range of communication to encompass a wide range of groups. She seems interested in striking a balance between communication with as wide an audience as possible, while still delivering a clear, concise message. The focus is on the message and, thus, the contact, Roman Jakobson's (1990) term for messages that serve primarily to establish, prolong, or discontinue communication. It is the contact that enables the message to resound and echo in a multiplicity of ways in the mural.[117]

Mazurana interviewed Juana Alicia for this article, and Juana Alicia's own words very effectively convey the deeply felt political message of the mural:

> People don't realize [where their food comes from], and what goes into it, and the suffering that people have to endure to bring food to the table, and all the pain that comes with our food, and all the destruction and poison, and all the simultaneous beauty of the people and the environment. And the incredible knowledge that people bring with them from Mexico about farming techniques, about 2000 years of cumulative understanding of botany and agriculture.... A reverence for the earth, a reverence for life itself, for growing seasons and all these things. These [knowledges and skills] are put through the meat grinder of North American agribusiness, now multinational agribusiness.
>
> (Juana Alicia, interview by author (Dyan Mazurana), tape-recorded, Berkeley, California, 9 February 1999, her emphasis)[118]

Timothy Drescher criticizes the Coit Tower murals because they only show happy white workers in idyllic fields and factories, and goes on to praise Juana Alicia's work,

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[117] Dyan Mazurana, "Juana Alicia's Las Lechugueras/The Women Lettuce Workers," *Meridians* 3.1 (2002): 54-81.

[118] Ibid.

painted fifty years later:

> Juana Alicia was impelled to articulate a different reality appropriate to the time and to her mural's audience. The style is still basically realistic, and the mural is beautifully painted. She shows women lettuce workers following behind a harvester driven at a pace controlled by the bosses (or is it the Immigration Service, the hated *migra*?), who look on from the background. The women, including a prominent figure visibly pregnant, are being sprayed with pesticide as they work. The impact of the more recent mural indicates a major shift from the perspective recorded in the New Deal piece. Not least in the differences in the two murals is the fact that this one was painted on the street, giving the viewer access not only to the finished image, but in some cases to the process of its painting and the opportunity for discussion with the artist.[119]

Las Lechugueras boldly asserted Juana Alicia's activist intent by reflecting the experience of an often overlooked population, instilling pride in the strength and dignity of female workers, and simultaneously criticizing the wretched working conditions and environmental damage (still) inherent in much agricultural production; perhaps educating the passersby about the true cost of the food they purchase. The wide availability of organic produce today is due to the demand by educated consumers who may have been brought to an awareness of the damage pesticides can cause by images such as *Las Lechugueras*. The radioactive pollution portrayed leaking from the Fukushima nuclear power plant in the *Spiral Word* speaks to Juana Alicia's continuing concerns with issues of environmental justice.

TE OÍMOS GUATEMALA/WE HEAR YOU GUATEMALA

In 1985 Juana Alicia, working with *Placa*, painted *Te Oímos Guatemala/We Hear You*

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[119] Timothy Drescher, "Street Subversion: The Political Geography of Murals and Grafitti" in *Reclaiming San Francisco; History, Politics, Culture,* ed. James Brook, et al. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 233.

Guatemala[120] in Balmy Alley to raise awareness about the genocide[121] being carried out by the brutal military government against the Maya people of Guatemala. As many as 600 villages were destroyed, and 150,000 Mayan people were killed. Furthermore, "*la violencia*" that the Guatemalan government was perpetrating against its own people was carried out by troops that had been trained under the U. S. Alliance for Progress program (See Appendix F). Many Mayan people fled their homelands in order to survive, and some came to the United States, where they were denied asylum and became "illegals", and, along with many other displaced Central Americans, ended up in the Mission district in San Francisco.

In *Te Oímos Guatemala*, a woman kneels with her hands outstretched to a body whose bare feet emerge from under a sheet. She wears a traditional *huipil*, or embroidered blouse, and head wrap. Her mouth is pulled back in an agonized rictus, and shock waves of grief ripple outwards until her lamentation hits the Mission district, thousands of miles away. The theme of Mayan women would be picked up several more times by Juana Alicia, as would the theme of the flicker of hope amid despair, as seen in the doves that the woman wears as earrings. In *Walls of Empowerment* Guisela Latorre writes that "This detail would prove to be almost prophetic in its vision, given that Rigoberta Menchú, a Quiché Maya woman, would emerge a few years later as one of the most prominent peace activists of our time".[122] In fact, Rigoberta Menchú won the Nobel

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[120] *Te Oímos Guatemala* became weather-damaged, and was replaced by Juana Alicia's *Una Ley Immoral* in 1996.

[121] See Appendix C, re. Rios Mont.

[122] Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 168.

Peace Prize in 1992 and Juana Alicia honored her by giving her a prominent position as the central figure in the enormous Women's Building mural, *MaestraPeace*.

The image of Rigoberta Menchú in *MaestraPeace* not only pays tribute to her as a heroic woman, but also serves a reminder of the bloody US-backed Central American wars of the 1980s, wars that provoked many of the outraged murals created in the Mission District during this period; images which resurface, so as never to be forgotten, in *The Spiral Word*.

EL AMANECER/THE DAWN

Like El Salvador and Guatemala, Nicaragua was also caught in the conflagration. The Sandanista National Liberation Front overthrew the oppressive Somoza dictatorship in 1978, and then in the 1980s the revolutionary Sandanista government was forced to wage war with the US-backed Contras, a war that took the lives of many thousands of Nicaraguans.

In part because of her overtly political work in Balmy Alley, in1986 (the year of the infamous Iran-Contra scandal), Juana Alicia traveled to Nicaragua to paint *El Amanecer/The Dawn.* She did so in collaboration with Amanda Bergman and other American and Nicaraguan painters, on the façade of the National Teacher's Association in Managua. Juana Alicia writes that

> Balmy Alley, the diverse streetscape that critiqued U.S. aggression in Central America was filmed in a video, and sent to the then-Minister of Culture of Nicaragua, poet Ernesto Cardenal.[123] I was part of that rowdy and wildly differing

[123] Ernesto Cardenal (b. 1925) is a "poet-priest" and liberation theologian who founded a "primitivist" art colony in the Solentiname Islands in Lago Nicaragua. He was Minister of Culture for the Sandanista government from 1979 – 1987. Cardenal has said

> collective of painters, all opposed to U.S. intervention, and the revolutionary government of Nicaragua requested that we create similar murals in solidarity in that gorgeous and hopeful land.[124]

The mural they created, *El Amanecer/The Dawn*, features a huge tree of life,[125] another theme that runs through many of Juana Alicia's works, including *The Spiral Word*. In *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua* David Kunzle writes that under the tree

> a child and adult are being taught to write by literacy campaign workers. Child writes 'La solidaridad is la tenure de los pueblos' (Solidarity is the affection of peoples),[126] on a piece of paper resting on a book open at a page inscribed 'Despuès del primer paso pararemos de andar jamàs.children' (After the first step we will never stop) – Ricardo Morales Avilès; left, a mass demonstration with children in the foregournd and banners behind them saying "Solo La Unidadnos harà Fuertes y respetados – ANDEN' (Only Unity will make us strong and respected – Nicaraguan Teachers' Association), 'Marcha por la Dignidad,' 'Muerte al Somocismo,' 'Operacion Justicia,' and 'F. M. S. N.' (Federacion Sindical de Maestros Nicaragüenses, Federated Union of Nicaraguan Teachers). A building behind is marked Escuela Emmanuel Móngalo; right: digging, picking

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that the "revolution is a work of art. 'Culture is the revolution, and the revolution is culture. There is no separation.'" Kunzle, see footnote 27.

[124] Juana Alicia, "Remembering the Mission: A Reflection," September 20, 2007, *juanaalicia.com,* accessed October 27, 2013. http://www.juanaalicia.com /content/remembering-the-mission-a- reflection/

[125] The tree of life has become a bitterly ironic symbol in Nicaragua. When I visited in July and August of 2015, I saw many forty-five foot tall yellow-painted metal *Arboles de la Vida* in intersections of the main roads of Managua. The trees are filled with electric lights and cost a staggering $20,000 each and many thousands of dollars every month in electric bills in a country that is one of the poorest in the Western Hemisphere and where many people do not have electricity in their homes. Inspired by a Gustav Klimt painting, they are the brainchild of Rosario Murillo, the wife of Nicaragua's president Daniel Ortega. The couple, once a poet and leader of the Sandanista revolution respectively, have abandoned their revolutionary ideals for a powerful nepotistic and dynastic rule.

Tracy Wilkinson, "Nicaragua's first lady is a powerful partner of president." *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 2015, accessed February 20, 2016. http://www.latimes.com /world/mexico-americas/la-fg-nicaragua-trees-20150524-story.html

[126] *In Remembering the Mission* Juana Alicia translates this phrase as "Solidarity is the tenderness between peoples/nations".

> cotton and coffee, music. In the background a figure paints 'Solidaridad' on pink banner that winds across whole mural, starting in blue and white and becoming red and black over school.[127]

El Amanecer celebrates the role of the teacher in social revolution and celebrates a new Nicaraguan literacy, highlighting the role of education as activism. The mural references *Amanecer del Pueblo (Dawn of the People),* a primer based on the pedagogy of Paolo Freire used during the Sandanista Literacy Crusade. The primer consisted of photographic images known as "generative themes" used to instigate dialogue and raise critical consciousness.[128] A parallel can be seen between the idea of generative themes and the Codex section of *The Spiral Word*, as will be discussed in Chapter Four. In Nicaragua, education was seen as a vitally important aspect of the revolution, and the Literacy Crusade as a second revolution. Kunzle goes on to write that in the many revolutionary murals "dawns are everywhere, in the symbolic role of rebirth."[129] Juana Alicia describes her experience in Nicaragua;

> It was incredibly moving to create a work of art for a society struggling to create a sovereign alternative to capitalist imperialism and fight a war at the same time. We observed first hand the fate of teachers who went into the war zones to implement a curriculum of cultural, ethnic and political equality: ambush, rape and death. We saw many young people wounded in war. We were witnesses to the toll of alcoholism on a nation that lost one third of its population to the violence wrought by our own government. Returning to the Mission in the fall of 1986, I was a changed person.[130]

Education, support through acts of solidarity, and bearing witness are all-important

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[127] David Kunzle, *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua: 1979-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 126.

[128] Luciano Baracco, *Nicaragua: the Imaging of a Nation: From Nineteenth-Century Liberals to Twentieth-Century Sandanistas* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 87.

[129] Kunzle. 33.

[130] Juana Alicia, "Remembering the Mission."

aspects of activism, including critical muralism as activism. *El Amanacer* directly addresses the idea of education as a human right and as an important weapon in the fight for social justice. Although arguably the Sandanista revolution in Nicaragua has failed, and many of the revolutionary murals have been destroyed, the message of education as activism remains as relevant as ever.

CEASE FIRE/ALTO FUEGO

Continuing the theme of protest against and education about United States-backed war in Central America, Juana Alicia painted *Cease Fire/Alto Fuego* on Mission Street at the corner of 21st in 1987. A Honduran schoolboy carrying a book bag is standing in a green field, the spectacular volcanoes of Central America in the distance. A sunburst appears over his right shoulder, the rays streaming off the wall, and circles ripple out from its center, like the effect when a stone is cast into still water. In front of the schoolboy, large disembodied hands try to block the muzzles of four guns that are pointed at him, protruding into the frame from our vantage, almost as if we are holding them, implicating us as United States citizens. *Cease Fire/Alto Fuego* was created in solidarity with the protesters at the Concord Naval Weapons Station trying to stop shipments of United States weapons to the wars in Central America, during which, as Juana Alicia writes

> a munitions train would run over one of the protestors, a decorated Vietnam veteran named Brian Willson. He lost both of his legs in that disaster and became a symbol of struggle for the international peace movement. This tragedy, combined with the U.S. invasion of Honduras that same year, angered me and inspired the mural.[131] As I was finishing it, the antiwar community organized

[131] In May of 1987, the US launched "Operation Solid Shield," a military exercise and show of force in Central America that coincided with "the 'spring offensive' that United States officials have said the Nicaraguan rebels have planned. The rebels, known as contras, have sanctuaries in Honduras but have begun operating inside Nicaragua, the

> marches down Mission Street to protest the ongoing invasion of Honduras, and the mural became part of that street theater. (As of 2002) The wars in Central America had ended, but the U. S. government continued and continues to wage war in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq. Unfortunately, it is a piece whose time has come and gone and come again.[132]

Cease Fire/Alto Fuego was badly defaced in 2013 by spray-painted graffiti, was then partially covered with green paint, and now is entirely painted over. Its poignant message of outrage against U. S. involvement in foreign wars, including the War Against Drugs, is no longer a potent reminder of recent history. (Plates 10, 11, and 12.)

Plate 10. *Alto Fuego/Ceasefire*, deteriorated.
By permission of the artist.
Photo by the author.

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officials said." Richard Halloran, "New U. S. Exercises Set for Honduras" in the *New York Times*, March 22, 1987. Accessed 12/07/2013.http://www.nytimes.com /1987/03/22/us/new-us-exercises-set-for-honduras.html.

[132] Juana Alicia, "Remembering the Mission."

Plate 11. *Alto Fuego/Ceasefire,* with graffiti.
By permission of the artist.
Photo by the author.

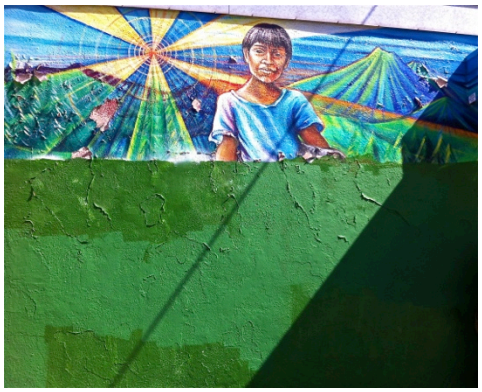

Plate 12. *Alto Fuego/Ceasefire*, painted over.
By permission of the artist.
Photo by the author.

MAESTRAPEACE

Large-scale images of women abound urban environments. However, they appear mostly on glossy billboards in which young, sexy, and airbrushed models hawk the latest commodity and bear no resemblance to actual women. At the top of the Women's Building on 18th Street at Valencia in the Mission, the radiant smile of Rigoberta Menchú, the Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner, lights up the neighborhood from five stories overhead and provides a beautiful antidote to the objectified and implausible images that women are confronted with every day.

Maestrapeace covers the entire façade of the Women's Building, and was painted in 1993 by a collective of seven women; Juana Alicia, Miranda Bergman, Edythe Boone, Susan Kelk Cervantes, Meera Desai, Yvonne Littleton, and Irene Perez. It glorifies heroic, ordinary women on a grand scale, something not often seen in mainstream media. It was a huge achievement for all the women involved, and for Juana Alicia, the mural is

> a 'standing ovation to women's liberation', as my colleague Miranda Bergman says. I feel that mural is so iconic: it has resonated with people from around the world. Because of the mural's wide impact, because of the depth of our collaboration, and because it has become a vehicle for training young women artists in muralism, it has become one of my favorite pieces.[133]

Maestrapeace contains many images of both ordinary and noteworthy women worldwide, including the aforementioned Rigoberta Menchu, as well as painter Georgia O'Keefe, Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, poet Audre Lord, United Farmworker organizer Jessica Govea, and anti-apartheid activist Lillian Ngoya, all of whom, and many more, illustrate a Women's History lesson, every month of the year.

UNA LEY IMMORAL

In 1996, Juana Alicia painted over her deteriorated Balmy Alley mural, *Te Oímos Guatemala*, replacing it with the iconic image of Monsignor Oscar Romero, who gazes directly out at us from behind his signature black-framed glasses. The title, *Una ley immoral, nadie tiene que cumplirla/No one Should Comply with an Immoral Law*, is spelled out in polychrome block letters against a brilliant scarlet background, in Spanish to the left of Romero, and in English to his right. Each letter contains a little scene painted in the flat, vibrant, abstract style of Salvadoran folk art made famous by Fernando Llort. On March 24, 1980, the day after he told crucifix-wearing soldiers that they were killing their own people, and that no soldier was obliged to obey an order that was contrary to God, Archbishop Romero was assassinated while he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of the hospital where he lived. A supporter of liberation theology who

[133] Juana Alicia, "On Art, Activism, and Social Justice", interview in *Apuntes A Latino Journal*, October 6, 2013, accessed December 7, 2013. http://apunteslj.com/on-art-activism-and-social-justice/.

defended the poor people caught up in the bloody civil war in El Salvador, in death he became a martyr and unofficial saint of all oppressed Latin American peoples. He is, in fact, being considered for canonization by the Catholic Church: a process that has moved closer to actuality with the beatification of Romero on May 23, 2015 by Pope Francis, another Latin American man of the people. As an icon of the left, Romero's image in didactic community murals is almost as ubiquitous and potent as that of César Chavez or Martin Luther King Jr., all of whom, to quote Paulo Freire, serve as reminders "to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[134]

LA LLORONA

The theme of environmental justice first displayed in *Las Lechugueras* was revisited in 2004 when Juana Alicia had to repaint the wall at York & 24th Streets, because that mural had been badly damaged by water, and could not be repaired. She replaced *Las Lechugueras* with *La Llorona,* a mural that in its heavily researched imagery, imbedded in a complex narrative, foreshadows the style of *The Spiral Word*. The imagery is so complex, in fact, that it is not easily decoded, but unlike *The Spiral Word,* Juana Alicia has not provided a written narrative to help the viewer understand the imagery. In this sense *La Llorona* functions in the same way as *The Spiral Word*; as a method of critical pedagogy, both murals require the viewer to conduct research in order to fully grasp the meanings of the complex iconography. *La Llorona* looks at the environmental struggles of women around the world, and is centered on water, which as William Finnegan writes

[134] Freire. 17.

in a compelling report for *The New Yorker*, is one of the most significant issues that faces the world today: "water use in many areas exceeds nature's ability to recharge supplies. By 2025, the demand for water around the world is expected to exceed the supply by fifty-six percent." *La Llorona* includes depictions women in Cochabamba, Bolivia engaged in *la guerra del agua,* fighting for the "removal of a private, foreign-led consortium that had taken over Cochabamba's water system." San Francisco-based Bechtel Corporation dominated this consortium, and along with other corporations such as Enron, ran into opposition from "opponents of privatization, who believe that access to clean water is a human right." In Cochabamba, this opposition took the form of a populist rebellion that shut down the city in the spring of 2000, and included peasant farmers as well as the urban poor.[135]

In another powerful image in *La Llorona*, Indian farmwomen stand neck deep in the rising waters of the Narmada River to protest the flooding of their villages. Irresponsible damming of the river by the Indian government had caused the displacement of at least 320,000 rural people, as well as flooding of 37,000 hectares of forest and agricultural land. Another 25,000 continued to live in the submergence zone, in direct violation of an Indian Supreme Court decision stating that the government must provide suitable resettlement for people displaced by the rising water.[136]

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[135] William Finnegan, "Letter from Bolivia, Leasing the Rain: the World is Running out of Fresh Water, and the Fight to Control it has Begun", in *The New Yorker*, April 8, 2002, accessed December 7, 2013. http://www.newyorker.com /archive/ 2002/04/08/020408fa_FACT1.

[136] Ena Lupine, "Protesters Assemble to Opposes Sardar Sarovar Dam", International Rivers: People, Water, Life, January 1, 2007, accessed December 7, 2013.

The *Mujeres de Negro,* another theme picked up again in *The Spiral Word* and discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, are also included in *La Llorona*, and are shown protesting the unsolved murders of female *maquiladora* workers in Ciudad Juarez on the Rio Bravo, a river that serves as the border between the U. S. and Mexico. All of these images are tied together by the mythical figure of La Llorona, the woman who allegedly drowned her own children and now weeps for them. Here, however, Juana Alicia has appropriated La Llorona and repositioned her as a Mother Earth figure, and says,

> as a woman, I feel a deep relationship with that story: a rebellious woman as the protagonist/victim/scapegoat and her mixed-race children as the lost peoples. I think it's really important for Chican@s. There is a lot of feminist writing about turning the story around and taking her out of the victim role to set her as an actor in a more positive light, historically. She wasn't responsible for the conquest, right? And she responded in the best way her circumstances allowed her to. When the mother is trying to save her child from the slave master, the only thing she can do is try to kill her child, right? It is insanity, but it is responding to an insane situation.[137]

Juana Alicia is raising her brush in protest against globalizing forces that spread poverty, and would sell women their own water. This mural not only aims to educate the public about environmental issues, it motivates action by instilling pride: drawing from inspiring stories of heroic women who refuse to be victims. Juana Alicia thinks of *La Llorona* as her "*Guernica*. If Picasso's testimony to war challenges the heroic and victorious concept of war, then *La Llorona* challenges the idea that women cannot be heroic or victorious."[138]

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http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/protesters-assemble-to-oppose-sardar-sarovar-dam-1968.

[137] Juana Alicia, interview with *Apuntes*.

[138] Leticia Hernandez, "Juana Alicia: A Muralist Takes a Global Look at the Spirit of Women," accessed December 7, 2013. http://www.juanaalicia.com/content/57/.

TRUE COLORS MURAL PROJECT

Education is an aspect of activism that Juana Alicia takes very seriously. She has worked as a teacher for most of her adult life, and her intent as a critical muralist is to educate the public through the content of her murals. Currently she teaches at Berkeley City College where she founded and directs the True Colors Mural Project. Her Mural Design and Creation classes pass her technical, political, and artistic knowledge on to the next generation. In collaboration with the City of Berkeley Youth Works Program and Earth Island Institute, her students design a public mural during the fall semester and paint it during the spring. She describes how

> the True Colors Mural Project supports the development of young artist/activists for the improvement of the urban environment through the creation of public murals. The purpose of the murals is to both educate urban dwellers and beautify the urban environment with messages and images that support ecological sustainability, conservation and restoration. The project recruits, engages and employs under-served, at risk youth from Berkeley and the greater East Bay, in vital community environmental mural arts projects. True Colors trains young artists to design and create community murals with social and environmental justice themes.[139]

Rather than personally designing a True Colors mural, Juana Alicia teaches technique to largely untrained young artists, and guides the process from start to finish. Although technically not her work, her vision as an artist, educator, and activist is strongly felt during the process, most especially during the research phase in which students are required to educate themselves on a variety of social and environmental justice topics, and in the final result. To date there have been at least seven murals created by True Colors in Berkeley, in locations ranging from the exterior wall of Mi Tierra Foods,

[139] Juana Alicia, "True Colors Mural Project," accessed December 7, 2013. http://www.juanaalicia.com/content/424/.

interior walls at the Berkeley YMCA-PG&E Teen Center, and at the Realm Charter School.

One of the most challenging True Colors mural projects was on the entire exterior wall at Inkworks Press.[140] The student-artists worked with the worker-owned collective of Inkworks, a commercial printing press located on 9th Street in Berkeley, to create a mural that would address social and environmental justice issues. Over the years, Inkworks has printed many posters for events ranging from political actions, to meetings, and musical celebrations, and published a book documenting a selection of these graphic works.[141] At the request of Inkworks, the mural included many of those posters, including Rupert Garcia's poster of Mother Jones, the image of Archbishop Oscar Romero on a poster advertising the 2nd National Caravan of Salvadorans for Peace and Justice in Central America, a poster for the UC Center for Latin American Studies exhibit of Fernando Botero's Abu Ghraib paintings, posters for the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and many others, all blowing in the "winds of change" coming from the central image of a printing press. The mural was painted in 2010, during the ongoing financial crisis, and imagery dealing with bank foreclosure was included, along with a highly topical and emotionally charged portrait of Oscar Grant, the young black man killed by BART police in Oakland early on New Year's Day 2010.

All of the imagery in the Inkworks mural is based on the themes presented in the chapters of the Inkworks book, *Visions of Peace and Justice*; *Internationalism & Peace,*

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[140] I met Juana Alicia in the fall 2009 when I took her mural design class at Berkeley City College, and worked on the Inkworks project through the spring of 2010.

[141] Inkworks Collective, ed. Lincoln Cushing (Berkeley: Inkworks Press, 2007).

Labor Movement, Racial Justice, Women's Liberation, Queer Liberation, Environment & Public Health, Elections & Reforms, Arts & Culture. The mural is entitled *Posters of Resistance: Visions of Peace and Justice*, and Juana Alicia describes the process of designing and painting the mural as being as complex and detailed as the title.

> It was a thorny and convoluted rollercoaster ride kind of process that happens whenever you've got more than three people involved in anything. Personal politics between students, and the organization, and all of those complexities, but it worked out well. You know, when you get on that train, you just never know what's going to happen, and I think the proof was definitely in the pudding, the mural is quite brilliant, beautiful. It depicts the history of printing from the Gutenberg press to the offset press, images that have been produced digitally, and the legacy of graffiti art on parts of the metal beams of the mural, and the history of social movements, both in the images in the mural itself, and in the posters that are contained within the mural, and it was a really fun and exhausting process. We had a very diverse cast of characters, as we always do at Berkeley City College – that's why I teach there, I just love it, the spectrum of people, class-wise, race-wise, gender, philosophy, in every way is so scintillating, so, I hate the word diverse, I'm getting tired of 'diverse', but with such variety, that it definitely showed in the project.[142]

One of the students at the time, Olivia Levins-Holden, describes the process as one of true collaboration between student and teacher, student and patron, and among the students themselves, who sometimes literally drew on the same page. She writes; "In groups we developed and revised sketches depicting various struggles within these topics, and with consistent feedback from Inkworks members, refined the images into a design that encompasses these topics. The final theme for the mural, therefore, is one of struggle and resistance to injustice, past and present. In particular, the centrality of printed image and word in various contexts of movement and struggle."[143]

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[142] JA/AC.

[143] Olivia Levins-Holden, "True Colors Mural Program Presents *Posters of Resistance*, Final Color Design for the Inkworks Mural," Berkeley City College, accessed

The students drew on thirty years of political posters in the archives of Inkworks press, and published in *Visions of Peace and Justice,* to educate themselves about social and environmental issues, and received an intensive education in collaboration, design, and follow-through on an often-exasperating project. It is impossible to gauge the effect the Inkworks mural has had on the public, but there can be no doubt that the critical consciousness of the students who worked on the mural was raised during the nine month process, myself very much included. Sadly, Inkworks closed their business as of December 31, 2015, and the building has been sold; the future of the mural is uncertain.

CONCLUSION

Paul Boden, who is an advocate and activist for the homeless in San Francisco, captures from another angle how activism informs art, and how art informs activism:

> When artists bring their skills and the tools they possess to the community's struggle for social justice, their work shows the strength and humanity that is at the core of every authentic poor people's movement. One powerful image can lay waste to a thousand racist, classist political slogans. Images can move people in their hearts. They give poor people a 'mirror' to hold up against false stereotypes and proclaim, 'this is who we are.'
>
> Artwork as part of a movement is a vital organizing tool, reaching people who may never listen to a word we say or read an article we write. But it also builds artists as organizers; it deepens their commitment and understanding, and connects them closer to the people whose message needs to be represented. As community organizers need to listen, reflect, and respond to a community, so, too, do artists.
>
> And finally, artwork as part of a movement lets artists as a group become an integral part of their community. They have a role in building a country that respects and values the humanity of us all.[144]

December 7, 2013. http://www.berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/jaaraiza/true-colors-mural-for-inkworks/.

[144] Paul Boden, "Artists and Organizing Today: A Homeless Perspective," afterword in *Hobos to Street People: Artist's Response to Homelessness from the New Deal to the Present* (San Francisco: Freedom Voices, 2011), 76.

Boden's words illustrate that the content-driven form that Juana Alicia's artworks take is meaningful to people outside of the institutions of art, and can in fact "lay waste to a thousand racist, classist" images perpetrated by the politically and culturally elite, an elite that very much includes the academic institution of Stanford University. Juana Alicia's work remains a meaningful instrument of critical pedagogy because her imagery has grown richer and more complex as it reflects an increasingly complex world. The narrative of *The Spiral Word,* located in the belly of the beast at Stanford University, not only transmits a clear message of cultural pride by reclaiming cultural history, but also creates a sophisticated device for critical consciousness-raising by using Latin American literature as a subtext. In Chapter Four, I demonstrate that the iconographically rich imagery of Juana Alicia's *The Spiral Word* is a prime example of didactic critical muralism.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE DECODING OF *THE SPIRAL WORD* AS A METHOD OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

THE ICONOLOGY OF *THE SPIRAL WORD*

Juana Alicia has spent much of her career working not only as a mural artist but also as an educator. In the mid 1990s, she went to Italy to study an early childhood educational system called Reggio Emilia, named after the town where it began, with the man who developed this pedagogy, Loris Malaguzzi. Several schools that base their teaching philosophy on the Reggio Emilia philosophy are named for Paulo Freire, including the one in Italy where Juana Alicia studied. Presumably this is because Freire's own pedagogy and that of the Reggio Emilia system have much in common, especially the strongly held belief that education should be student-centered. One can perhaps assume that Juana Alicia is familiar with the ideas of Paulo Freire, and if so, that she consciously embeds critical pedagogy in her approach to mural making.

Many of Juana Alicia's murals serve as good demonstrations of how art can function as didactic narrative with a critical message, but because of its complexity, *The Spiral Word* is particularly effective in this regard. Chapter Four is a third reading of *The Spiral Word*, digging more deeply into the complex iconology to reveal that it functions as a work of art that aims to educate, reclaim history, and inspire with messages of pride and hope, all ingredients essential to activist art as a form or critical consciousness raising.

The Spiral Word: El Codex Estánfor, Juana Alicia's three-part mural at Stanford University's El Centro Chicano, is as she says, "one of the most compact and narrative

rich works"[145] she has created. Working with the input of Stanford students and alumnae, the murals represent the "past, present, and future realities for Latin@ indigenous students at Stanford."[146] The inspiration and structure for Juana Alicia's suite of murals is the history and literature of Latin America and the resulting densely populated narrative imagery of *The Spiral Word* provides a poetic lesson worthy of its place in a major educational institution. Juana Alicia cites many literary sources including the *Popol Vuh*, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, José Martí, Violeta Parra, Junot Díaz, Julia Alvarez, "and more than any other author, Eduardo Galeano. His books, *The Open Veins of Latin America*, and trilogy *Memory of Fire*, function for me like a subtext for the whole set of paintings, most especially the codex."[147]

The complex iconology of the mural demands this third reading; if the viewer wishes to thoroughly understand the imagery found in *The Spiral Word*, she must dig below the surface, an analysis that requires independent research as well as reading the aforementioned literary source materials, especially those of Eduardo Galeano, as well as investigating other sources. In this sense *The Spiral Word*, especially the codex section, functions in a similar way to Paulo Freire's idea of "generative themes," images meant to provoke dialogue, and as he writes "Every thematic investigation which deepens historical awareness is thus really educational."[148] In Chapter Four, I argue that it is this deeper investigation of the iconology that makes *The Spiral W*ord such an effective tool for activism, in that if the viewer is actively engaged in decoding the images of this

[145] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at el Centro Chicano de Estánfor."
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 90.

inherently didactic mural, investigating the source material provides a semester's worth of education. The education one receives from this deeper reading lies at the heart of what makes it activist art; one cannot work to change problems one does not know about, or hold people down who have reclaimed cultural pride.

THE MAYAN SCRIBE

As one enters El Centro Chicano, the first image of the mural one sees is that of the Mayan scribe writing across generations to the future. Although it might seem historically inaccurate to portray the scribe as female, in our interview Juana Alicia defended her choice by advocating for the right of women to have a voice;

> Well there were female scribes in the Mayan tradition, I didn't make that up,[149] and I chose that because I'm sort of an advocate for women's roles as having a voice– there are a lot of male figures in the images too, and I do believe in balance, and I love men as well – certainly the female voice is dominated in literature in the west, like that wonderful essay by Jane Smiley, *Can Mothers Think?* Really, she points out, before Virginia Woolf, all writers were men, and they were the sons, or brothers, or husbands of women, women did not write, women were not published – if they wrote they were not published. Really the whole construction of a woman writer and a woman who has a voice, and a woman who can tell her own history or *herstory* – it's important to celebrate the voice of women.[150]

Along with her gender, the partial nudity of the scribe also courts controversy because of the potential for the image to be sexualized by those who view it. Additionally, in Mesoamerica nudity was used as a way to humiliate captive enemies by deliberately stripping them of their identity, as seen for example in the Mayan murals at Bonampak in which captives are shown naked in contrast to the victorious and elaborately dressed

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[149] Michael D. Coe and Justin Kerr, *The Art of the Maya Scribe* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 99.

[150] JA/AC.

rulers. I asked Juana Alicia why she depicted a figure as honored in Mayan society as a scribe semi-nude? Juana Alicia responds to this question with frankness:

> Nudity? I didn't really think about it too much – it's sort of my heritage, both in western art and in Mexican art, there's plenty of nudity in Pre-Columbian art, a lot of people are decorated and tattooed – look at Rivera's murals in the Palacio Nacional, we have the tattooed women doing the trades in the market place, they're partially nude. I'd probably do it nude if I can, because the human body is so beautiful, and if you're looking at tattoos, why drape that. Her tattoos really represent my conversation with the students, because they wanted African, they wanted Samoan, I have an Egyptian lotus on her chest, I have Mayan, Aztec[151], Mapuche from South America in Chile and Argentina,[152] there are four directions images from the Incas,[153] I mean she's got like massive international wallpaper (laughs) and there's a Mayan scribe, a woman scribe on her arm.[154] I thought it was really important to use the language of the body to communicate all of that. You know, people are going to defame whatever they want to defame, and I'm not going to try to control that. When we did the Women's Building mural, the woman at the top, the pregnant woman is nude, and then we have the female fetus inside of her, we put that way at the top so nobody could graffiti it, so she could remain sacred and beautiful, and not sexualized, or treated in a defamed way. The Mayan scribe, she's right at marker height, but she is in Stanford, and she is in sort of a sacred place, and I think she's in a place that the students will protect and respect, and then, you sort of have to give your work to the world and say 'here, do what you will with it'.[155]

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[151] On the scribe's right shoulder is the Aztec *ollin*, found at the center of the *Sun Stone*, and symbolizing change and movement.

[152] The Mapuche are the indigenous people of south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina. They are still struggling for land rights, especially in the Valdivian forests, many of which have been taken over by foreign forestry companies. The Mapuche have their own flag;  .

[153] The Incan stepped cross, or *Chakana*, radiates out from the scribe's bellybutton, and represents the three realms of existence. The hole in the middle is the liminal axis, and also represents Cuzco, the center of the Incan world.

[154] A triple spiral motif appears below the scribe's breasts, a motif that is seen several more times in the mural. This motif appears in the murals at Teotihuacan, and represents the human heart, according to Michael Coe and Rex Koontz in *Mexico: from the Olmecs to the Aztecs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 115.

[155] JA/AC.

THE CEIBA TREE

As discussed in Chapter Three, trees are featured prominently in many of Juana Alicia's murals, including those murals she mentored through the True Colors Mural Project. In her narrative Juana Alicia writes that scribe sits on the "trunk of a ceiba tree, its thorns protecting her."[156] It might be more accurate to describe the trunk as the stump of a huge tree that has been cut down just above its roots. This is an apt image for a section of the mural that also includes dystopian city streets, setting up the idea of a past that was partially obliterated by colonialism, and a present where deforestation is a major driver of climate change. In *Memory of Fire: Faces and Masks*, the Uruguayan poet and historian Eduardo Galeano writes

> The imposing ceiba tree is a tree of mystery. The ancestors and the gods favor it. The flood respected it. It is secure from lightning and hurricanes.
>
> One may not turn one's back to it or walk in its shade without permission. Anyone striking an ax to its sacred trunk feels the ax-blow on his own body. They say that at times it consents to die by fire, fire being its favorite son.
>
> It opens when you ask it for shelter, and to defend the fugitive it covers itself with thorns.[157]

EDUARDO GALEANO

Here it is necessary to describe the work of Eduardo Galeano, its impact on Latin America leftist culture, and in particular on *The Spiral Word*. Galeano died April 13, 2015, and in his obituary in *The New York Times*, he is described as the "Uruguayan voice of anti-Capitalism,"[158] and an obituary in *The Guardian* describes how his book,

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[156] Juana Alicia, "Narrative for Murals at el Centro Chicano de Estánfor."

[157] Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire: Faces and Masks* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 33.

[158] Simon Romero, "Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan Voice of Anti-Capitalism, is Dead at 74," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2015, accessed July 10, 2015.

Open Veins of Latin America established

> Galeano as one of the region's most prominent writers, became a rallying cry among leftist circles, and was banned during periods of military leadership in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. A recent edition included an introduction by novelist Isabel Allende, who once said the book was one of the few items she brought along when she fled Chile after the military coup in 1973.[159]

In her review of Martha Nandorfy and Daniel Fischlin's *Eduardo Galeano: Through the Looking Glass*, Erin Kaipainen writes that Galeano has been described as "one of the most important literary voices to come out of Latin America in the last few years in relation to human rights."[160] However his work has largely been ignored by literary critics and historians, and in this sense Galeano's reception is similar to that of mural artists who are seldom represented in museums or academia. Like Juana Alicia's work, Galeano's work "'resists categorization and as a result, people do not know what to do with it. In terms of history, Galeano is very suspicious of historical accounts that are written in one voice and that claim to be objective.'" In her review Kaipainan extensively quotes Nandorfy and Fischlin who describe Galeano's work in other ways that parallel Juana Alicia's work as well; "'human rights and the tumultuous historical events of Latin America are often more accurately represented in literature than they are in the legislative and legalistic documents that protect those rights.'" Kaipainen further

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www.nytimes.com/2015/04/14/books/eduardo-galeano-uruguayan-voice-of-anti-capitalism-is-dead-at-74.ht

[159] Ashifa Kassam and Sam Jones, "Eduardo Galeano, leading voice of Latin American left, dies aged 74", *The Guardian*, April 13, 2015, accessed July 10, 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/13/eduardo-galeano-open-veins-of-latin-america-writer-dies.

[160] Erin Kaipainen, "Addressing the Political and Social Urgency of Eduardo Galeano" *Research Reporter*, Issue 5, September 2002. Brock University, Ontario, Canada, accessed March 12, 2016. http://www.brocku.ca/webfm_send/4451

states, "'At the time they were written,' Nandorfy argues, 'novels by many Latin American writers addressed current political issues, in addition to addressing the results of the conquest, colonization, and subsequent neo-imperialism.' Literature that addresses political and social situations, Nandorfy suggests, 'cannot be passively consumed.' Galeano's work resists categorization by virtue of its simultaneous poetic and political power. Nandorfy and Fischlin describe this style as 'a composite' in which 'the pastiche and collage of the wildly dissimilar produce a fractured whole.'"[161] In *Eduardo Galeano, Through the Looking Glass*, authors Fischlin and Nandorfy further describe Galeano as an "artist whose resistance to reductive categories emerges from an allusive, allegorical style predicated on the transformation of found materials into narratives that interrogate simplistic genre-divides between fictive and lived experiences."[162] In this regard, Juana Alicia's style, especially in *The Spiral Word*, closely parallels that of Eduardo Galeano, as this quote from Fischlin and Nandorfy illustrates:

> The union of feeling and thinking – *senti-pensante* – that unexpectedly creates incendiary networks of solidarity also describes a vision in which mythic imagination is aligned with solidary social aspirations that seek to change the world as it has become. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in Latin America, informed by the attributes of magic realism, which admits different forms of consciousness instead of suppressing them though rationalization. The cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples has endured despite the extreme solitude to which the European colonialists and present-day nationalists have condemned them. The regenerative power of their memory, kept alive by word of mouth, independent of the writings and images destroyed in numerous bonfires over the centuries, speaks in Galeano's vision for humanity.[163]

In this sense, Galeano's "vision for humanity" is echoed in Juana Alicia's own vision

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[161] Ibid.

[162] Daniel Fischlin and Martha Nandorfy, Eduardo Galeano: Through the Looking Glass (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 2002), 5.

[163] Ibid. 387.

of humanity, and the complex narrative of *The Spiral Word* serves to inspire activism, in the same way that activist communities are described by Fischlin and Nandorfy; "at the heart of every such community lie the fertile and dangerous possibilities of human potential to reshape the world through acts of narration and through acts engendered by narration."[164] Or, as Galeano himself so succinctly puts it in *Open Veins of Latin America*, "the first condition for changing reality is to understand it."[165]

GALEANO AND HENNEQUEN

Galeano's words provide the subtext, the layer one must dig below the surface to find, most obviously for the imagery of the mural in the "page" of the codex section of *The Spiral Word* titled *Conquest and Slavery*, where workers in sugar cane and henequen fields are depicted. Sugar has been responsible for a whole host of ills, as Eduardo Galeano explains in a chapter devoted entirely to "King Sugar" in *The Open Veins of Latin America*:

> For almost three centuries after the discovery of America no agricultural product had more importance for European commerce than American sugar. Canefields were planted in the warm, damp littoral of Northeast Brazil; then in the Caribbean islands – Barbados, Jamaica, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Guadalupe, Cuba, Puerto Rico – and in Veracruz and the Peruvian coast, which proved to be ideal terrain for the 'white gold.' Legions of slaves came from Africa to provide King Sugar with the prodigal, wage-less labor force he required: human fuel for the burning. The land was devastated by the selfish plant which invaded the New World, felling forests, squandering natural fertility, and destroying accumulated soil humus.[166]

Galeano goes on to state,

> The fulcrum of the triangular trade – manufacturers, slaves, sugar – between

[164] Ibid. 30.
[165] Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America*, 267.
[166] Ibid. 59.

> Europe, Africa, and America was the traffic in slaves for sugar plantations. As Auguste Cochin wrote: 'The story of a grain of sugar is a whole lesson in political economy, in politics, and also in morality.'[167]

Henequen, also known as sisal, is a type of agave that produces tough fibers in its long leaves, used to make rope. In the 1880s the Yucatán became rich from production of henequen, but at a cost to the laborers who worked under deplorable conditions as virtual slaves. Henequen is still produced, although in limited quantities, and it is still backbreaking, low-paying work.[168] Galeano writes harshly about the treatment of henequen workers.

> The Yaqui Indians of the Mexican state of Sonora were drowned in blood so that their lands, fertile and rich in minerals, could be sold without any unpleasantness to various U. S. capitalists. Survivors were deported to plantations in Yucatán, and the Yucatán peninsula became not only the cemetery of the Mayas who had been its owners, but also of the Yaquis who came from afar: at the beginning of our century the fifty kings of henequen had more than 100,000 Indian slaves on their plantations. Despite the physical endurance of the strapping, handsome Yaquis, two-thirds of them died during the first year of slave labor. In our day henequen can compete with synthetic fiber substitutes only because of the workers abysmally low standards of living.[169]

GALEANO & MINING

Although no indigenous miners appear in the mural, Juana Alicia mentions forced labor in copper and silver mines in her narration of this section, and the silver mines of Potosí in Bolivia take up another entire chapter of the *Open Veins of Latin America*. In it Galeano quotes Karl Marx when he discusses the true economics of the mines:

> Marx wrote in chapter 3 of the first volume of *Capital*: 'The discovery of gold

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[167] Ibid. 79.

[168] Beryl Gorbman's website has a good overview and contemporary photos, as well as a link to a site with historic photos of henequen production. Accessed 9/30/2013. http://gorbman.com/2010/02/24/henequen-in-yucatan/

[169] Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America*, 48.

> and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation.'[170]

Galeano goes on to make it clear that this accumulation of European wealth came at a terrible cost to the indigenous peoples of the Andes; Potosí was a "mouth of hell that swallowed Indians by the thousands every year,"[171] and that

> In 1581 Phillip II told the *audiencia* of Guadalajara that a third of Latin America's Indians had already been wiped out, and that those who survived were compelled to pay the tributes for the dead. The monarch added that Indians were bought and sold; that they slept in the open air; that mothers killed their children to save theme form the torture of the mines.[172]

GALEANO AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN WARS

In the section of *The Spiral Word* titled *Resistance and Revolution* we see Mercedes Sosa silhouetted against flames, and behind that as Juana Alicia explains "in the extreme background, the third layer, sort of the street layer, are images of destruction of the early 21st century, with the wars in Central and South America, and the dictators, from Rios Montt to Pinochet, Trujillo, and Reagan."[173] Some of what drives the energy of the resistance portrayed in this section of the codex is Juana Alicia's anger at the atrocities perpetrated during those wars. Again, Eduardo Galeano's words provide the subtext for this imagery. In *Upside Down: a Primer for the Looking-glass World,* Galeano thoroughly condemns the United States involvement in the wars in Central America:

> On September 20, 1996, the U. S. Defense Department also made a public

[170] Ibid. 28.
[171] Ibid. 40.
[172] Ibid. 38.
[173] JA/AC

> confession. The story earned little or no coverage from the major news media. That day, the highest military authorities acknowledged that they had made "a mistake": from 1982 to 1991, they had trained Latin American military officers in the arts of threat, extortion, torture, kidnapping, and murder at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, and at the southern command in Panama. The "mistake" lasted a decade, but they didn't say how many Latin American officers received the mistaken training or what the consequences had been.
>
> In reality, the Pentagon's classes for future dictators, torturers, and criminals have been denounced a thousand times in the past half-century. Their Latin American students numbered some sixty thousand. Many of these same students became dictators or public executioners and left a permanent bloodstain south of the Rio Grande.[174]

It is worth delving further into the importance of Ríos Montt, Pinochet, Reagan, and Trujillo to Juana Alicia's narrative; her anger about the U. S. backed dictators and the devastating Central American Wars is a driving force and emotional underpinning for much of her work. For more information on the above, see Appendix C.

GALEANO AND THE ZAPATISTAS

Galeano's literary hand can be seen again in the image of the Zapatistas on the serape of Mercedes Sosa in the center of the codex. Galeano had an epistolary friendship with Subcomandante Marcos, the nominal leader of the Chiapas rebellion, and writes poetically of the Zapatistas,

> Mist is the ski mask the jungle wears. That's how it hides its persecuted children. From the mist they emerge, to the mist they return. The Indians of Chiapas wear majestic clothing, they float when they walk, and they speak softly or remain silent. These princes condemned to servitude were their first and the last. They've been run off the land and out of the history books, and they've found refuge in mist, in mystery. From there they've emerged, wearing masks, to unmask the power that humiliates them.[175]

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[174] Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down: a Primer for the Looking-glass World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 194 – 195.

[175] Ibid. 323.

GALEANO AND VIOLETA PARRA

Regarding the image of Violeta Parra, Eduardo Galeano writes of a community in Chile who resists the dictator Pinochet that;

> The dictatorship of General Pinochet changes the names of twenty bone-poor communities, tin and cardboard houses, on the outskirts of Santiago de Chile. In the rebaptism, the Violeta Parra community gets the name of some military hero, but its inhabitants refuse to bear this unchosen name, they are Violeta Parra or nothing.
>
> A while back they had decided in unanimous assembly to name themselves after the campesina singer with the raspy voice who in her songs of struggle knew how to celebrate Chile's mysteries.
>
> Violeta was sinful and saucy, given to guitar-strumming and long talks and falling in love, and with all her dancing and clowning around she kept burning the empanadas. Thanks to life which has given me so much, she sang in her last song: and a turbulent love affair sent her off to her death.[176]

As can be seen, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of the writing of Eduardo Galeano in providing the emotional and literary underpinning for this part of the mural. In doing research for this thesis I read four of Galeano's books which provided even more eye-opening Latin American history lessons, and although poetic, proved to be effective means of raising my critical consciousness about historical events I certainly never learned about in my formal education.

JUNOT DÍAZ: TRUJILLO AND THE MIRABAL SISTERS

Dominican born author Junot Díaz is another writer who provided important literary subtext for the imagery of both Trujillo the Mirabal sisters in the *Resistance* section of the *Spiral Word*.[177] Juana Alicia mentions in a video by Edgardo Cervano-Soto that the

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[176] Eduardo Galeano, *Century of the Wind*, 277.

[177] Edgardo Cervano-Soto, *Murals in Progress: Juana Alicia Creates for El Centro Chicano de Estanfor*. http://vimeo.com/34690085

Stanford students who were surveyed about what they wanted in this mural cited Díaz and his Pulitzer prize-winning novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* as a particularly important literary text. Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, who was assassinated in 1961, is described by Díaz in a tragi-comic footnote in his novel;

> Trujillo, one of the twentieth century's most infamous dictators, ruled the Dominican Republic between 1930 and 1961 with an implacable ruthless brutality. A portly, sadistic, pig-eyed mulatto who bleached his skin, wore platform shoes, and had a fondness for Napoleonic-era haberdashery, Trujillo (also known as El Jefe, the Failed Cattle Thief, and Fuckface) came to control nearly every aspect of the DR's political, cultural, and economic life through a potent (and familiar) mixture of violence, intimidation, massacre, rape, co-option, and terror; treated the country like it was a plantation and he was the master.[178]

In another footnote in his novel, Díaz refers to the Mirabal sisters, also depicted as heroic women of resistance in the center of the mural.

> The Mirabal sisters were the Great Martyrs of that period. Patria Mercedes, Minerva Argentina, and Maria Teresa - three beautiful sisters from Salcedo who resisted Trujillo and were murdered for it. (One of the main reasons why the women from Salcedo have reputations for being so incredibly fierce, don't take shit from nobody, not even a Trujillo.) Their murders and the subsequent public outcry are believed by many to have signaled the official beginning of the end of the Trujillato, the "tipping point," when folks finally decided that enough was enough.[179]

APPROPRIATED PHOTOS AND OTHER SOURCES

Along with literary inspiration, Juana Alicia appropriates visual material from various sources, including the internet. For example, the image of the Guatemalan women on the Mercedes Sosa's serape looks like a photo credited to "Mujeres Ixchel" titled "Indigenous Woman in Court" from a Latin American Bureau blog about Guatemalan

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[178] Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2007), 2.
[179] Ibid. 83.

women fighting for their rights, in this case testifying at the trial of Efraín Rios Montt.[180] I was easily able to find the source for the image by searching for "Guatemalan women" on Google Images.

The modern *gemelos* would seem to be based on the photograph of a Mara Salvatrucha gang member that has been reversed and repeated, making an image of mirror opposites. The photographer is not credited, and the photo is on the Pinterest website,[181] making its original source difficult to trace, but again, I easily found this source photograph (along with many other violent and disturbing images), by searching for "Mara Salvatrucha tatoos" on Google Images. (For further information on the Mara Salvatrucha, please see Appendix D.) Of these modern twins Juana Alicia says,

> The two brothers in the contemporary scene, one is sort of a gangbanger, and the other is the visionary, like a Stanford student – not the model student so much, it doesn't need to be that – but just somebody who is taking care of themselves and his family and his community, and his world. The Mara Salvatrucha one, the gang image brother, he's got tattoos all over him – images of the drug wars, and addiction, and the *maquiladoras*, and the border, and all the things that people go through on a daily basis just to survive, to get in and out of this country, and to make a living, and all that kind of thing. The other brother has more visionary images on him; images of balance, images of vision, and self-care and care for nature, and that kind of thing.[182]

Several other sources for the iconography in *The Spiral Word* can be seen in Edgardo Cervano-Soto's video, shot in Juana Alicia's studio, in which she discusses her process and the literary inspiration for the murals. She mentions the Popol Vuh, and clearly seen

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[180] Silvia Rothlisberger, "Guatemala: fighting for women's rights", *Latin American Bureau*, May 14, 2013, accessed March 12, 2016. http://lab.org.uk/guatemala-fighting-for-womens-rights

[181] "MS 13 member," Pinterest, accessed March 12, 2016. https://www.pinterest.com/pin/200128777164735002/

[182] JA/AC.

in one shot are Miller and Taube's *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, along with *The Codex Borgia*, by Gisele Diaz and Alan Rogers, and *Patas Arriba, La Escuela del Mundo al Reves*, by Eduardo Galeano.[183] One of the "images of vision" depicted on the left arm of the visionary twin is a dancing Mayan lord wearing a jaguar pelt that strongly resembles a drawing from Miller and Taube. The caption of this drawing reads, "In a state of shamanic transformation, a Maya lord would take on the animal self or *uay*, most commonly the jaguar; from a Late Classic Maya vase, Altar de Sacrificios."[184]

THE "WARRIOR TWINS" OF BONAMPAK

Behind the modern twins, imposed on the turquoise and white butterfly, appear figures from the battle scene of the fresco cycle at Bonampak in Chiapas, Mexico, of which Juana Alicia says

> The Warrior Twins, that whole section comes straight from the *Popol Vuh*, and the twin brothers that go the Underworld to fight the gods of the Underworld, and bring back corn and save humanity. Their names are Ixbalanque and Hunapu, the brothers, and I have a scene where the twins fight the Underworld gods in the background of the contemporary twins, and that comes from the frescos at Bonampak.[185]

The warriors that Juana Alicia depicts are from Room 2 at Bonampak, and according to author and Mayanist Robert Sharer, are not in fact the hero twins Hunapu and Ixbalanque.

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[183] Edgardo Cervano-Soto, *Murals in Progress: Juana Alicia Creates for El Centro Chicano de Estanfor*. Accessed 2/16/2016. http://vimeo.com/34690085

[184] Miller and Taube, 103. The Altar de Sacrificios is a Late Classic Mayan polychrome pottery vase, and can be seen in fig. 15.19 of *The Ancient Maya* by Robert J. Sharer.

[185] JA/AC.

> At the focus of the scene stands the war leader, standing full front and grasping a captive by the hair while holding in his other hand a thrusting spear decorated by a jaguar pelt (south wall, upper register.) This figure identified as Chan Muan, is accompanied by another elite warrior who may be an allied ruler (possibly Shield Jaguar II from Yaxchilan?); both wear jaguar tunics and elaborate headdresses, and each is protected by an entourage of elite warriors.[186]

Chan Muan II was installed as lord in Bonampak by the lord of Yaxchilan, Sheild Jaguar III, and the entire fresco cycle was painted to commemorate this event in 790 CE; therefore it clearly depicts real rather than mythical warriors, and has no direct connection to the *Popol Vuh*.

THE ICONOLOGY OF THE BUTTERFLY

The iconology of the turquoise and white butterfly that Juana Alicia describes as the Aztec *ollin,* symbol for movement and balance*,* is particularly freighted with meaning beyond her description. Seen as almost kitsch in its guise as a symbol of happiness and innocence, in reality butterflies are a spectacularly diverse and beautiful family of insects, and play an important ecosystems role as pollinators. Butterflies have symbolized many things in global cultures, but are frequently associated with the soul, especially in Western culture; according to James Hall "In antiquity the image of the a butterfly emerging from the chrysalis stood for the soul leaving the body."[187] In Mesoamerican culture, the butterfly is most often associated with Teotihuacán and the Aztec. The "Great Goddess" mural, sometimes called the "Teotihuacán Spider Woman," has a double helix tree of life emerging from behind her, the branches of which end in flowers

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[186] Robert J. Sharer, *The Ancient Maya* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 255.

[187] James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1974), 54.

with drooping hummingbirds hanging from them. On the trunks of the tree are spiders and butterflies which Esther Pasztory describes as "a vision of peace and plenty, an earthly paradise presided over by a benevolent being."[188] In contrast however, Linda Manzanilla writes; "the [Teotihuacan] Butterfly God is represented on incense burners and is probably linked with death and fertility."[189] The butterfly was an important theme in Aztec religious art as well, as Esther Pasztory writes, a butterfly can be seen on a "platform carved with wavy lines suggesting water in which float skull, bones, and human hands. A large butterfly, its wings ornamented with obsidian knives, holds bleeding hearts in its human hands. This images may refer to the cult of sacrifice and the *tzitsimime*, female monsters of destruction."[190] As can be seen in even a brief discussion of the butterfly in Mesoamerican culture, it is complex symbol with multiple meanings.

Recently the Monarch butterfly in particular (orange and black, not the turquoise and white that Juana Alicia depicts), has become a symbol of immigrant pride and struggle for rights; the image of a butterfly with the slogan "Migration is Beautiful" can be seen T-shirts, posters and protest signs.[191]

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[188] Esther Pasztory, "Teotihuacan Unmasked: a view Through Art," in *Teotihuacan: Art from the City of the Gods*, ed. Kathleen Berrin and Esther Pasztory (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 55.

[189] Linda Manzanilla, "Daily life in the Teotihuacan Apartment Compounds" in *Teotihuacan: Art from the City of the Gods*, ed. Kathleen Berrin and Esther Pasztory (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 96.

[190] Pastorzy, Esther, *Aztec Art* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 236.

[191] Artist Favianna Rodriquez created the "Migration is Beautiful" image, and writes that the "butterfly symbol was not my idea. Immigrant rights activists have seen the butterfly as a symbol of fluid and peaceful migration for generations. To me, the monarch butterfly represents the dignity and resilience of migrants, and the right that all living beings have to move freely. I believe that we shouldn't allow our identity to be defined only by our suffering, nor by the actions that others have taken to devalue our

THE BEEHIVE DESIGN COLLECTIVE

The butterfly symbol has also been prominently displayed in the work of the Beehive Design Collective, a group of activist artists who create huge, intricate, black and white cartoon drawings, used as educational "portable murals" to try to describe deeply complex social and environmental justice issues. Linda Weintraub describes the Beehive Design Collective, formed in Maine in the year 2000, as creating "public domain images to encourage duplication in multiple formats for use as educational and protest-organizing tools."[192] *Mesoamérica Resiste* is a work that has many parallels to Juana Alicia's *Spiral Word*, and according to the Beehive Design collective website is the third "and final image in the trilogy that focuses on resistance to the mega-infrastructure projects that facilitate extraction and the neoliberal model of 'development.' These graphics reflect our efforts to go beyond illustrating just the bad news, to also sharing stories of collective action and inspiration, stories of other worldviews and ways of life."[193] Like Juana Alicia, the Beehive Collective provides a written narrative to decode their complex didactic imagery, and as in *The Spiral Word*, their narrative ends with a utopian vision of collective action, the participants protected by the roots of a ceiba tree.[194] The written narrative in both cases provides a useful educational aid to more

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families and our labor — rather, let us celebrate our beauty, pride, and resilience in the face of inequality and injustice." "Artists Statement on Immigration," *Migration is Beautiful*, accessed April 14, 2014. http://migrationisbeautiful.com/.

[192] Linda Weintraub*, To Life! Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2012), Kindle edition.

[193] "Mesoamérica Resiste," *Beehive Design Collective*, accessed February 17, 2016. http://beehivecollective.org/graphics-projects/mesoamerica-resiste/.

[194] The meaning of some of the parallel imagery shared by *The Spiral Word* and *Mesoamérica Resiste* is described in the Beehive Design Collective's narrative, and

deeply understanding the complex ideas of the imagery.

As the Beehive Design Collective points out, the butterfly has lately become a symbol of immigration because it is a migratory species. The butterfly in *Mesoamérica Resiste* is shown in a field of corn, which indirectly brings up the point that Monarch butterfly migration is in trouble; numbers of Monarch butterflies that migrate from North America though the Midwest of the US and overwinter in the mountains of central Mexico have declined precipitously in the last twenty years. As Brad Plummer writes in the *Washington Post*, the three main reasons for this decline are illegal deforestation in Mexico, severe weather caused by climate change, and perhaps most significant, "the growth of herbicide-based agriculture destroying crucial milkweed flora in the Midwest."[195] Despite Juana Alicia's narrative that describes the butterfly in *The Spiral Word* as simply an agent of positive change, it is difficult not to view it as a complex image with enormous cultural, social and environmental significance.

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includes a conch shell, a map "drawing parallels between colonial history and modern day capitalism," the ceiba tree, the "War on Drugs, which has led to dramatically increased violence and militarization," references to the U. S. backed military dictatorship, genocide, and civil war in Guatemala, "Troops force ants into a mass grave and firebomb their crops and villages, a direct reference to the scorched earth policy of the military dictatorship in Guatemala in the early 1980s, a genocide campaign that specifically targeted the Ixil Maya people. Guatemala's civil war is emblematic of the entire region's history, a long history of land grabs, inequality, racism, and US intervention," climate change disasters, the Triangle Trade of gold, sugar, and slaves, drugs, represented by hypodermic needles, water privatization, (not seen in the *Spiral Word*, but dealt with in *La Llorona)*, living system of bacteria to reclaim polluted water, similar to mycoremediation, NAFTA and indigenous land rights, *maquiladoras*, a Mayan pyramid as reference to Mayan history, and a section entitled "Resistance and Repression," in which Zapatistas are seen as models of resistance.

[195] Brad Plummer, "Why are the monarch butterflies disappearing?" in *The Washington Post*, December 3, 2013, accessed April 19, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com /blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/12/03/why-are-the-monarch-butterflies-disappearing/.

A COMPARISON OF THE ICONOGRAPHY OF *THE SPIRAL WORD* TO OTHER CHICANA/O MURALS

Although there is only one small helicopter in *The Spiral Word*, seen against the orange smoke rising from the destruction of war and environmental disaster, it is a fearful modern symbol of oppression that, according to Holly Barnett-Sanchez, is seen in the form of "military and police helicopters" in many Chicano murals.[196] Some other images that the *Spiral Word* shares with previous Chicano murals are barbed wire, the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service,) syringes as emblems of drug abuse, and gang violence. Barnett-Sanchez argues that by the 1980s these images "had become iconic, some would say clichéd."[197] However the damage that drugs and the United States War on Drugs have wrought in the form of social, economic and environmental disaster has only gotten worse; the wave of unaccompanied minors fleeing gang violence in Central America and washing up on the U. S. border is just the latest example of this unfolding catastrophe.[198] The image of the syringe is as relevant as ever, as is also seen in the Beehive Collective's use of the hypodermic needle as a symbol of destruction in *Mesoamérica Resiste.*

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[196] Holly Barnett-Sanchez, "Murals," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*, volume 3, ed. Suzanne Oboler and Deena J. González (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 203.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Ted Galen Carpenter, "The child migrant crisis is just the latest disastrous consequence of America's drug war" in *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2014, accessed February 17, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/07/21/the-child-migrant-crisis-is-just-the-latest-disastrous-consequence-of-americas-drug-war/.

HOPE AND UTOPIA AS IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF ACTIVISM

El Futuro is the final "page" of the codex section of the *Spiral Word*, and is a utopian vision of peace in which the world is healed. The scribe of the future, looking strong and joyful, is foregrounded against huge trees and their spiraling roots from which mushrooms grow. The optimistic solution to environmental problems that Paul Stamets presents in his TED talk on using mushrooms to clean up toxins (as discussed in Chapter One,) is an alternative to a mega-corporate dystopia of business as usual. Educating people on existing problems and then presenting alternative solutions is an important part of activism, including activist art. For example, the Beehive Design Collective presents images of an alternative economy based on exchange, and Maya Lin's ongoing multimedia project "What is Missing" educates with discouraging stories and videos about biodiversity loss, but also delivers hope in the form of conservation success stories.[199] Hope is a necessary component of activism, as Juana Alicia says, and her imagery modeling an alternative utopia is a fitting expression of hope to end a narrative that travels from an Eden and its downfall, through struggle and redemption. Juana Alicia feels strongly about ending on a note of hope[200] as do Eduardo Galeano and Paulo Freire. In her forward to *Open Veins of Latin America,* Isabel Allende writes, "it is this breath of hope that moves me most in Galeano's work,"[201] and Freire writes "Nor yet can dialogue exist without hope… hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and

[199] Maya Lin, "What is Missing?" accessed February 17, 2016. http://www.whatismissing.net/

[200] JA/AC.

[201] Isabel Allende, forward to *Open Veins of Latin America*, xiii.

fleeing from it."[202] In the *El Futuro* section of *The Spiral Word*, the trees rising from fertile soil into a limpid sky represent life itself, which persists even in the worst of times. Eduardo Galeano ends *Memory of Fire*, his three-volume history of Latin America, with a profoundly hopeful short chapter in which he describes an eternal dance around the tree of life. (See Appendix F.)

Murals such as *The Spiral Word* can also function as a form of healing, of which hope is an integral component. The activist mural group, Walls of Hope, for example, "is an international art and human rights project of art, education, conflict resolution, crime prevention, diplomacy building, community development and preservation of historic memory."[203] Working with communities that have been traumatized by war, such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Argentina, murals are created collectively to help foster the peace process; "Through art and creative praxis, children and youth focus on conflict resolution envisioning a proposition for endurable peace."[204] The Beehive Design Collective also has a similar vision of their work: "the Ceiba tree's spreading buttress roots hold the scenes together and tell an overarching story of rootedness. This tree is a gathering place, a beacon in the center of town that brings people together to share stories and announce calls to action." As seen here, and in *The Spiral Word*, roots are a symbol of regeneration, nourishment, and refuge from war and man-made natural disaster.

In a striking parallel to the utopian vision that concludes the narrative of *The Spiral Word*, young people in *Mesoamérica Resiste* are seen as hope for the future.

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[202] Freire, 72.

[203] "About Us" Walls of Hope/School of Art and Open Studio in Perquin, El Salvador, accessed February 11, 2015. http://wallsofhope.org/en/about/,

[204] Ibid.

> The youth are surrounded by references to memory and oral history. Flowers, plants, a conch shell, music, and traditional weavings are all passing knowledge and stories down through generations, their voices spiraling out in the form of *volutas*. The *voluta* is a Mayan glyph representing speaking and listening. Throughout the poster it symbolizes the power of the word.[205]

The last sentences of this quote from the Beehive Design Collective could be describing *The Spiral Word*, and *El Futuro* specifically, in which we see a young woman representing future generations with the spiral *voluta* emerging from her mouth, writing the future, armed with knowledge she has gained from the past.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the many complex images in *The Spiral Word* can function as "generative themes" that provide entry into investigating troubling issues of the past and the present, not many of which are included in a mainstream curriculum. The themes range from repressive colonial history and its aftermath, to the United States backed civil wars in Central America, the War on Drugs, inspiring leaders of resistance to the dominant culture, and environmental problems, all tied together by the image of the spiral breath, the *volute*. The ultimate meaning of *The Spiral Word* is the power of literacy, both visual and textual, to educate about the past in order to promote critical consciousness, in hopes that an educated people will shape a better future. This meaning is embodied the mural itself; Juana Alicia's intent was to educate the viewer and the murals complex imagery functions as an effective pedagogical tool.

CONCLUSION

The scope of this thesis does not allow for gauging the effectiveness of the complex iconography of *The Spiral Word* as a method of critical pedagogy on its viewers. I can

[205] "Mesoamérica Resiste," *Beehive Design Collective*, accessed February 17, 2016.

only address the effect it has had on me, and conclusively state that my understanding of the history and culture of Latin America, and contemporary issues facing Latin Americans, have been deepened immeasurably.

In the process of conducting the research for this thesis I have gained knowledge about subjects ranging from ancient Mayan culture to the ongoing War on Drugs, from the Chicano political movement of the 1960s and 1970s to current forms of activist art, from the murals at Tenochtitlán to the murals of Diego Rivera and the myriad murals in San Francisco, and in the process read works of Latin American literature from *The Popol Vuh* to the prolific writing of Eduardo Galeano, along with Junot Díaz, Julia Alvarez, Jose Martí, and Isabelle Allende – all of which proved most effective raising my own critical consciousness.

As a community college instructor whose student population is at least fifty percent Latino, doing the research on Juana Alicia and her work has given me important insight into that population. I hope that the historical and cultural information I have gained will allow me to start my students on their own journey towards critical consciousness; I am constantly surprised at the lack of knowledge about their own histories and cultures that my students display. As a teacher, I can easily see using *The Spiral Word* as a tool of critical pedagogy by having each student research an individual image and present their findings to the entire class. The very complexity of the mural defies easy understanding, but investigating each image was an extremely effective way of raising my own critical consciousness, and I believe that this effect could be replicated in a classroom setting as well.

As I write this, it is a particularly brutal and cringe-inducing run-up to the presidential elections in the United States. One candidate in particular is spewing hate and divisiveness; his sexist, racist, and anti-immigrant rhetoric is hard to escape in the mass media. He has stated that if he becomes president he would build a wall along the U. S. border with Mexico, and have the Mexicans pay for it. Considering this, I believe it is more important than ever to have alternate narratives such as Juana Alicia's *Spiral Word* that aim to inspire critical consciousness that, as Paulo Freire writes, takes the form of "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[206] This critical consciousness promotes understanding and dialogue with our neighbors both north and south of the border, instead of walling us off from each other and silencing the dialogue – to paraphrase Freire, silence is a form of despair.[207]

[206] Freire, 17.
[207] Ibid. 72.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH JUANA ALICIA, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA. MAY 29 AND JUNE 18, 2013.

PART ONE, MAY 29, 2013

Allison Connor (AC) - In a previous interview (with Paul Karlstrom, in 2000)[208] you said that you started painting murals in your bedroom in Detroit, and later, while in Watsonville you painted thirteen murals with your students. Can you elaborate on both of those statements, and discuss your early influences and how you got involved in mural painting?

Juana Alicia (JA) - Okay, well it was a long and circuitous journey from painting murals on my bedroom walls to painting murals with my students, and the journey probably took ten years or so, from point A to point B, but not as the crow flies. I was first introduced to murals because my parents took me to the Detroit Art Institute, and I had seen the Diego Rivera Detroit Industry murals, which were painted from 1932-33 with the assistance of Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff, who later became my teachers, twenty-five years or thirty years later. I was also exposed to the work of Kåthe Kollowitz because my mom had copies of some of her prints, hung in the hallway of our house. She was influenced by her aunt and uncle, Barbara and Alex Stavinitz, who were Ashcan School, Depression era printmakers. Kolllwitz and the Stavinitz's influenced me profoundly with their strong graphic styles, social critique and emotional appeals.

Also important in my formation as an artist was my experience at Cass Technical High School in downtown Detroit, a vocational high school where I was a performing arts major. At Cass Tech, one could major in visual art, fashion illustration, or art history. But, because I had a friend that took me to her classes in the visual arts, I

[208] "Oral history interview with Juana Alicia, May 8 and July 17, 2000." Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, accessed March 19, 2016. http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/ interviews/oral-history-interview-juana-alicia-13573

stumbled upon a turn of fate. Upon the invitation of my friend, I entered Dr. Cledie Collins Taylor's art history class and was fascinated with her brilliant, progressive and engaging way of presenting art history. I enrolled in her class, and that experience changed my life; she became a godmother and mentor for me, and along with her multitude of talented godchildren. Dr. Taylor is a sculptor, jeweler, collector and curator. Hers was the first black-owned gallery in Detroit, called Arts Extended. She's an international emissary for the legacy of African American art in the United States, and opened new worlds for me.

I started painting murals on my bedroom walls with my mother's permission, and I probably attended a third of my junior year and sort of slipped out of high school early. I was producing posters for the UFW (United Farm Workers), my mom was involved with the farmworkers – needless to say my mom was a very strong influence on me – she was a social justice advocate. I met César Chávez on one of his national speaking tours. I had been doing posters like, "Boycott A & P," "Boycott Grapes," and I went to see him speak, he recruited me to move to Salinas and work with the Union, as a volunteer on their newspaper, *El Malcriado*. I, in the spirit of the times, after having spent a lot of time in social protest and meetings in high school, going to Black Panther meetings or anti-Vietnam war rallies, lots of similar activities, was very inspired to go work with the UFW! I took a train across Canada, and hitchhiked down the west coast to Salinas, sort of like the Bobbie McGee song by Janis Joplin, and met with my recruiter Venustiano Olguín, who two decades later would become my colleague, teaching at New College (in San Francisco.) I wasn't that inspired to work as a volunteer in the offices, or in the hiring hall; I was much more interested in working in the fields, and doing labor organizing in the fields, being with my people, the farmworkers, in the fields. I felt more inspired to work with the laborers, the *Mexicanos*, because I had grown up in a more Puerto Rican Spanish-speaking environment in Detroit, with lots of Italians and African American people, not that many *Mexicanos* around me. It was very exciting for me to have a sort of re-encounter with my culture, and to be actively organizing in the fields, which is a much more inspiring and beautiful place than an office, and ended up working

until I was seven months pregnant with my first child. At that point, I had pesticide poisoning, stopped working in the fields, and started working as a bilingual classroom teaching assistant. I ended up going through Migrant Teacher Corps, which was a program to help bring people who had worked in the fields into teaching positions, and was recruited by professor Ralph Guzman, at UC Santa Cruz. I graduated from UC Santa Cruz and took a teaching position in Salinas, and then in Watsonville, working mostly with migrant students. I eventually did thirteen murals in Watsonville, with my migrant students, both in the public schools and in local agencies like Salud Para la Gente, and that's sort of how we got from one point to the other.

AC - In that same interview, you stated your admiration for the Mexican muralists, Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros, saying, "They were involved in the same cultural reconstruction that we inherited from them as Chicanos, although we have reinterpreted it." Can you discuss this idea further, and how their work has influenced yours?

JA – Well it would be impossible in one interview to talk about all the ways their work has influenced mine. I traveled to Mexico as a young woman, as one of my sisters was educated at La UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) in Mexico City and I visited with her, and so spent a lot of time in Mexico City looking at the Rivera, Orozco, and Siquieros murals. I had friends in Mexico fortunately who were one or two generations before me, most remarkably Alberto Beltrán, who was awarded the national prize for art in Mexico a couple of times. He was part of El Taller de la Gráfica Popular, and a close friend of my husband, Emmanuel Montoya, so we visited him many times in Mexico City, later, and also I met and totally fell in love with Alfredo Zalce, in Michoacàn. Morelia, Michoacán's museum is named for him, the Alfredo Zalce Museum of Contemporary Art. He was a great printmaker and muralist; he painted frescos, made huge bronze reliefs, and did just about everything. These friendships with older Mexican artists had a profound influence on me.

Elizabeth Catlett, or Betty Mora, was a very strong influence as well; she just passed. Elizabeth Catlett was an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance. On a trip to Mexico with her then-husband, Charles White (another Harlem Renaissance luminary

visual artist,) she met printmaker Francisco Mora. She remained in Mexico to marry Mora and live the rest of her life with him in Cuernavaca. I met her a couple of times, but I can't say that I knew her. John Biggers, another great black American artist, was also a really strong influence on my work. I had studied him for years before I met him in Houston, at the end of his life, and was honored to be able to spend a couple of very meaningful days with him, when he shared much advice and wisdom with me, regarding teaching, working in public and the human spirit.

The Mexican muralists (and I include Frida Kahlo in this group) took Pre-Columbian art off the trash heap of colonial history, and brought a sense of *Mexicanidad* identity, a national, indigenous, and mestizo identity into the cultural mainstream of Mexican art. Until the end of the *Porfiriaco* (the dictatorship of Porfírio Díaz), all art schools and academic training in Mexico was based upon the European canon. First of all, education was mostly available for *criollos*, or non-indigenous Mexicans, the sons of the Spanish landed gentry. All of the sources of inspiration for teaching the arts in Mexico, up to the time of the revolution were colonial sources: European busts, casts, models and sources. For Mexican institutions, the center of the art world was Paris.

When the Mexican Revolution occurred, Modernism was birthing its myriad forms: Cubism and other forms of abstract painting were inspired by African art, and Eurocentrism beginning to lose its hold on the imaginations of Mexican artists, among others. The Harlem Renaissance was simultaneously laying claim to an original American voice rising from centuries of slavery and repression, like that of the Mexican pueblo in its struggle to free itself from a feudal and cruel class and caste system. During the revolution and afterwards, through the Mexican Muralists and the vision of Minister of Education, Jose Vasconcelos, Mexican art found a new, native source of vitality and identity. Rivera himself had missed the Mexican Revolution while studying painting in Paris and Russia, and came back to Mexico to find that the boat had already left the harbor in terms of this new *Mexicanismo*. But he got with the program really quickly and moved into its leadership. The Tres Grandes (the Three Great Ones: Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros) created public images of a new Mexico, based in its ancient past and profound

indigenous legacies and inspired by the ideas of revolution, socialism and anti-Fascism.

I don't know if I could pick a favorite, but I think Orozco was the clearest predictor of the future, and depicter of the human and environmental challenges that we're now facing, in terms of the destruction of the planet. For me, he was the most future thinking of the muralists. Siquieros was an incredible innovator, inventor with pryloxin, and a co-creator of acrylic paint with chemist Jose Gutierrez (Politec). Siqueiros was spraying, creating explosive images and jumping off the wall with the sculptural forms. Rivera was an inimitable draughtsman, and he had an imagination for the reconstruction of history, which his murals depicted in marketplaces and scenarios imagined from extensive study and research, creating awesome visions of Mexico's lost worlds. So all of these muralists were incredibly great models for myself and many other *Chican@/Latin@* artists.

Additionally, Frida Kahlo had a profound impact on my work, but I didn't really know about her until attending a presentation on her by the poet Naomi Quinoñes, at Cabrillo College in, I want to say 1976. I'd never even heard of Frida and I'd grown up with Diego's images and legacy. I was both astonished and inspired and you know, angry, that I'd never even been exposed to her, that no one in art history books or museums had even thought of her as important. This was before the Frida Kahlo coffee mugs or any of that kind of fame, or before the first exhibit in the US about Frida which was at the Galeria de la Raza, *Homenaje a Frida*, in the 70s. All of these people from Harlem to Michoacán, were really profound influences on me, and on many *Chican@* artists; the idea of reconstructing of our own historical identity in a public forum, making it available to people that wouldn't have access to museums or even academic education. What the Chicano movement did, that the Mexican mural movement didn't do, was to move all the murals from government institutions to the urban streets. It took over the contested geographies of U. S. cities, where we couldn't own any of the real estate, but where we could challenge and project our presence into the public's view.

I have to say that our greatest role models, in both of the Mexican and *Chican@* movements, were really the Harlem Renaissance and subsequently, the black Civil Rights

and cultural renaissance movements of the 1960's, the 70's, and beyond. And really, the first bold people's murals in the streets were done in Washington, D.C., Detroit (very close to where I grew up), and Chicago. These were the "Walls of Pride", and "Walls of Hope", African American murals. As I mentioned earlier, there were many relationships between the Harlem Renaissance, the Mexican muralism and printmaking movements, and other international liberation movements. This included support of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, anti-colonial resistance in Africa and Latin America. Black people and Latino people in the U.S., in Mexico and in other places, formed great alliances, and blazed trails for each other, back and forth, traveling switchbacks and reinventing the social vision of many marginalized sectors. When I came of age, African American people were in the vanguard, and served as a model for the Chicano mural movement. The Black revolutionary spirit of the 1960s was really a tremendous example: there were the Black Panthers, and the Brown Berets, of course the Puerto Rican rights movement, on the East Coast and Puerto Rico. All of those movements were intertwined, and very important for each other.

AC - You did your master's thesis in the study of true fresco with Lucienne Bloch, Diego Rivera's painting assistant, and Stephen Dimitroff, Rivera's plasterer when Rivera was working on his murals at the Detroit Art Institute and the Rockefeller Center. Can you describe your experience with Bloch and Dimitroff, and the work you did with them? Where did you do your graduate work, and what was the specific nature of your thesis?

JA - My first graduate work was at UC Santa Cruz, in education. I have a graduate bilingual specialist degree, everything short of a masters, because I wouldn't do the 500 page written thesis! (Laughs). I'll just take the bilingual specialist graduate degree, thank you! Up until then, I didn't have a formal art education other than taking classes at various schools, including Hartnell College in Salinas in ceramics, and a watercolor class at UC Santa Cruz, but really I didn't have a degree in studio art. My art degree was earned in the street, doing murals. By 1990 I was really teaching a lot, at different colleges, and although I liked it, I wasn't getting paid much for it. So I did my MFA at

the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), so I could continue teaching at a university level. When Rivera did his mural there, *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, SFAI was called the California School of Fine Arts. Lucienne and Stephen restored that mural, but I don't think they actually assisted on it.

At SFAI, I did my masters thesis on fresco painting with the Dimitroffs. I went up and stayed with them at their place in Gualala, or "Little Bulgaria", as they called it. I had first met Stephen and Lucienne because they had come to San Francisco to do some fresco workshops with our close circle of Bay Area community muralists: Miranda Bergman, Jane Norling, O'Brian Thiele, Ray Patlán, Arch Williams, Osha Newman, Susan Cervantes, Jamie Morgan and Eduardo Pineda. I think that was the group in attendance, give or take one or two - we had quite a clutch of artists that wanted to take fresco workshops with the already legendary couple, in their 80s. And I just totally fell in love with them. They were so funny, and told endless anecdotes about Diego and Frida: their relationship as a couple and their relationship as a quartet, in different configurations, and their experience at Rockefeller Center. Lucienne was the only person who documented the mural's demise – she had a little Leica camera in her overalls, and when the mural crew was being arrested by Burns guards, she took a freight elevator, a construction elevator up in front of the mural, by the front doors, and shot the only existing pictures of the mural, black and white pictures, of the mural with her Leica stored secretly in her overalls, before it was destroyed. And the couple had so many great stories. Lucienne recalled that when their children were toddlers, she'd let them run around the house while she sat in the playpen, and sketched. That was the only way she could get to do her work! And Stephen and Lucienne were so funny, brilliant, wonderful and just delightful to be around. They told me that I reminded them of Frida because I was so eloquent with profanity, and I looked like her in some ways, and that was always very flattering of course.

They were there the night Frida had to go to Henry Ford hospital. They were all staying in a hotel, at a cheap hotel near the DIA; Jews, and Frida was the Jew among them, were not allowed to stay in first rate hotels in Detroit. So they stayed around the

corner from that art school next to the DIA, and one night Stephen and Lucienne heard a ruckus coming from Diego and Frida's room. At first, they thought that Diego and Frida were having a terrible fight, but suddenly, Diego came knocking at their door, desperate and disheveled, and they asked what was wrong, and Diego said "Frida's having a miscarriage." They helped him get her to Henry Ford Hospital, and that's where she lost her baby, and the loss inspired her painting, *My Birth*. Soon after, Frida and Lucienne enrolled in lithography classes together at the nearby art academy, and Frida did those sketches of herself, which became the lithograph *Frida and the Miscarriage (El Aborto)*. Actually, Frida gave Lucienne and Stephen the original drawing, and I remember they said they were going to send their grandchildren to college on that, and probably did. And actually, the pregnancy/miscarriage image was something that Frida did as a sort of therapy while she and Lucienne took classes together at that school around the corner from the Art Institute.

Anyway, the Dimitroffs had millions of wonderful stories. They loved to tell how Madonna went to visit them in her stretch limo, winding her way up to Gualala, to interview them in preparation for supposedly playing Frida in the Hollywood movie (eventually played by Salma Hayek.) They would just hold court and regale everybody with their amazing stories, and really, doing the fresco thesis was a minor part of the experience; it was wonderful. They lent me their paint pots that had been Diego's, and I guess I mentioned that once in front of Lucienne's grandson, and he hounded me for them for a while, but I don't know where they are. I don't remember if I gave them back, or whether they're somewhere in my basement and I can't find them, who knows! If I ever find them I'll send them to the Dimitroff progeny.

Lucienne and Stephen were so generous with me and so sharing, it was such an honor to know them and have my life come full circle with that connection. I mean, when I was dropping out of high school, I was looking at Stephen's portrait, because he is in the Detroit Art Institute mural with his little John Lennon glasses and with big fat gloves on, working on some kind of metal press, in the foreground. The fact that so many years later he was to be my teacher, that was really phenomenal. He had agreed to plaster my

mural at the San Francisco International Airport, but he died in 1996, before I began the installation. Lucienne died shortly after, in 1999. So he didn't end up plastering the *Santuario* mural, but I do have his portrait as seen from the back, as one of the main figures in the foreground, and the mural is dedicated to them. So yeah, it was an amazing experience working with them. Of course I did learn the fresco technique, and I would like to teach it, at some point, but I don't know…

AC – That would be wonderful. I don't know if I told you this, but when I was starting to do some research for this project, that when I started thinking about Lucienne Bloch, and reading about them, I realized that I have a marker sketch of me, done by Lucienne Bloch.

JA – What?!

AC – She used to do art fairs in Marin County when I was a very young child, and my family lived briefly in Mill Valley.

JA – When they had the frame shop. Wow.

AC – So I have a portrait of me as a three year old. I couldn't believe it when I saw the initials.

JA – That's incredible, what a treasure.

AC – I've had it my whole life and I had no idea. Of course now it's faded…

JA – I would get that sucker scanned. I have an incredible restorer, Mario Bruno.

AC – I also have a print that came to me via a friend of my mother's by Emmy Lou Packard.

JA – Another dear friend, she was really close with my ex-husband, Emmanuel Montoya, and she gave us that huge oxen in the redwoods print.

AC – That's the one I have.

JA – You have it? I don't have it because that went with the divorce…

She was part of that same connection between the generations, for me, and my generation. I knew Emmy and loved her. The last time I saw Emmy Lou Packard, I was painting the mural at Cesar Chavez elementary school, and I went to get a burrito or something, and I saw her on the street. She had a little handbag, and gloves, and she was

all fixed up, and she was going out. I said "Emmy, where are you going?" and she said (whispers) "I'm going downtown to shop, I'm going to Macy's and Nordstrom's, don't tell anybody." She had been living at the old folks home right there at 23rd and Van Ness, and she had gotten out somehow, and was going shopping (laughs). That was the last time I saw her. She used to host Diego Rivera's birthday celebrations, which is December 8th. Emmy Lou was the energy behind that celebration every year at San Francisco City College, in front of the Pan American Unity Mural. She was writing a book on Rivera's works in the U. S. when she died – that would be a masters thesis for somebody, to get that book out.

AC – in another lifetime…

JA – That's how I feel. Did that answer your question?

AC – The specific nature of your thesis…

JA – I learned the fresco technique and produced several works of art in the medium as my thesis. One of them is on the altar over there, you'd have to open that door to see it – it's a small image of a shell with water flowing through it (10" x 16") – I did a series of small images, and then I did a large piece that weighs about 200 pounds, it's downstairs, a fresco of a homeless man called *Citizen*. I was done with my thesis by the time I painted *Citizen*, and the Dimitroffs had recently died. Later In 1999-2000, I did the mural at the airport, and that was the last fresco that I've done. I haven't yet had an opportunity to do more; they're very expensive. I'd like to do more, but we'll see.

AC - You mention that Diego Rivera went to Italy to study the Renaissance technique of *fresco buono*, and that you also went to Italy and spent time in the Sistine Chapel, looking a Michelangelo's work - can you talk about that connection, from Michelangelo to Rivera to you?

JA - Well, I think that's absolutely hysterical, since I've never been to Rome, or the Sistine Chapel! I <u>really</u> want to go. I have been to Florence, and had a transformative experience in the *Museo del Davide*, David's museum. I love Michelangelo anyway, and I was feverish that day in Florence. I had bronchitis, and it was the end of my

trip to Italy. I had gone to study an educational system in north Italy called Reggio Emilia, that's the name of the town where they developed the system, with the man who developed it, Loris Malaguzzi, at Scuola Paulo Freire. I was helping to initiate and direct a charter school, based on that system that was called the San Francisco Early Childhood School for the Arts. It's still going – that was 1994, 95, and I was in Florence. I went to Florence's Galleria dell'Accademia where the David is housed. When you approach the David, you have to walk down this long hallway, of Michelangelo's unfinished marble sculptures, and that just, just – I was sobbing by the time I got to the statue of David, because to me those were more moving than the David itself, to see these figures emerging from the unfinished stone. Those are some of the most amazing things I've ever seen. Of course, Michelangelo's work has inspired me, both in the form of the frescoes and the form of drawing.

Of course, Rivera has been a major influence, due to his presence at my coming of age via the Detroit murals. I love his talks – I used to have a record, I don't have it any more, of interviews of Rivera by his daughter, and she says "Papa, *que estos artistas y arquitectos*, these artists and architects want to know what, in your opinion, is the role of the artist in society?" and then he launches on for about an hour, talking about the maestros – Giotto, Michelangel, Breugel, the popular artists, people who were interested in depicting the populace. He gives a Riveraesque Marxist analysis of the value of a work of art in and to the society, and the truly political content of every work of art. So there's a really big connection there for me, in terms of what really stirred me about the museum, the Detroit Art Institute; it wasn't fact that it was a museum, it was the fact that it had working people (depicted and visiting) in the museum, as the contemporary heroes and protagonists of our times. And these amazing drawings that are the frescos, these incredible depictions of the human form, everything else is an organic form, even all the machines are organic looking. So the idea of art being accessible and transformative and populist and radical and revolutionary and in the public plaza, in the public square, was riveting for me at the time.

It was the late 1960's and all hell was breaking loose with the system. Women, people of color and gay people were clamoring to dismantle the corruption of capitalism, and all the phobias – racism, sexism, and homophobia. For me, it was like everything came together looking at those murals. It was like oh my goodness, he's talking to me. I feel that way when I look at the Sistine Chapel, or when I look at Giotto or Breugel, or many, many other forms of art, Kåthe Kollwitz, and Elizabeth Catlett, there's just such a long list. And many contemporary works, like Banksy, Ai Weiwei, Hung Liu, Yolanda Lopez, lots of wonderful graffiti art, so it just touched that nerve, so that's where that continuum is.

AC - As director of the True Colors Mural Project through Berkeley City College, you have been actively involved in collaborative public art. Can you discuss that process specifically in regards to the mural project, *Visions of Peace and Justice*, at Inkworks Press in Berkeley?

JA – It's been a wonderful experience for me working at Berkeley City College, and helping to build a public art program there – the state has just approved our certificate degree in public art, that is transferable, and public art four year programs will recognize. Really, I don't think there's another A. A. certificate program in public art, anywhere in the state or in the country, and so that's really exciting. We'll be launching in the fall, with the two mural classes and the art in community class which Sharon Siskin will teach. In these keystone classes and many electives, critiquing the creative process is so important. So it's really, really exciting. We've done eight murals, well, really seven and a half because there's still one in progress for the West Oakland Youth Center, which I had to drop out of because of my medical leave. But we have done quite a few murals in the East Bay, all designed and created by my students, which I've directed. I have taught them the collaborative process, and mural techniques, and the community organizing skills that go along with creating any kind of public art.

The piece that we did at Inkworks, the "Posters of Resistance" – I always forget what the whole title is, when they get those long titles - *Visions of Peace and Justice; Posters of Resistance*, something like that. The project itself was just as detailed as the title, and

because you were a part of the project, you know that there was quite a bit of community-based research, mostly with Inkworks Press. You and your cohort used Inkworks' own text published in their history of revolutionary, community-based poster making, over their 25 – 30 year history: *Visions of Peace and Justice*. That book really provided the libretto for the mural. It was a thorny and convoluted rollercoaster ride kind of process that happens whenever you've got more than three people involved in anything. Personal politics arise between students, and the organization, but it worked out well. You know, when you get on that train, you never know what's going to happen, and I think the proof was definitely in the pudding: the mural is quite brilliant, beautiful. It depicts the history of printing, from the Gutenberg press to the offset press to images that have been produced digitally. The new tradition of graffiti art is stenciled onto the metal beams of the mural, and the history of social movements, both in the images in the mural itself, and in the posters that are contained within the mural. It was a really fun and exhausting process. I had my niece and my daughter in the class, twice, (laughs), which was fun, stimulating and challenging, and we had a very diverse cast of characters, as we always do at Berkeley City College. That's why I teach there, I just love it, the spectrum of people, class-wise, race-wise, gender, philosophy, in every way is so scintillating, so eclectic. I'm getting tired of the overused term "diverse", but our population has such variety; that it definitely showed in the project.

We were working on two major walls, or three, on two levels, or three if you count the roof, and with a very complicated scaffolding, and you know global warming – generally in the spring you can paint your mural through June and never worry about rain - and we got rained out something like six times in May, and had to tarp ourselves. It was just quite a process. I have to say that we had a really nice community celebration; my daughter became the manager for the inauguration. That was sort of fun, she had somewhat tired of the circus on the wall, and it was better sitting behind the telephone organizing everything for me, and I had wonderful students, incredible students, and great assistants, and at the end, the Trust Your Struggle Collective jumped in: Cece Carpio, Erin Yoshi, Miquel "Bounce" Perez, Plinio Hernandez, and Sean Burner. They

all jumped in and sort of helped my students finish up the mural, doing the calligraphy for the names, notably Miguel Perez, "Bounce". So it was just an incredible mash-up, almost theater. It went well, and it was well received by the community. I have noticed that the red in the T-shirt of one of the main printers in the image is fading, and it needs some re-touching. I had warned the student that painted the section that you have to paint in transparent layers, and not mix white into red, because it's fugitive. So we have to get somebody to get up there and put the red back in the T-shirt, the reds and the purples, but it's holding up very well otherwise. It was a great project.

> AC - Your work seems to fit into many art historical fields; Contemporary art, Chicano art, Mexican American art, Latin American art, American art, etc. If you had to, how would you categorize your work, and how do you feel about being categorized?

JA – Well you know, you want to resist that kind of pigeonholing; that's why I have worked as a sculptor, in fresco and in paint, drawing and printmaking, and have tried to work in a wide variety of media. I find that that also brings new ideas and freshness to the work. And you know, when you're sort of ghettoized as one thing or another, then you limit your audience, and you're limited by those categories. I think if I had to pick a category, I'd call it Magical Realism, which is supposedly a literary movement, but I do feel it's a visual movement as well, particularly in Latin America, and in Mexico, but also all over the world. It's really the ability to see the magic in the realism of everyday life. Writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, or Isabelle Allende, I'd say are major influences. Eduardo Galeano and Juan Felipe Herrera are inspirations.

Juan Felipe is now poet laureate of California, he's my *compadre*, and named the Stanford mural for me. Well, he wrote this long poem for me and I had to write him back and say "Juan Felipe, where's the title?" And he said, "well, any part of the poem will work", and then he said "Spiral the Word." But I thought that that construction might be hard for people to use, so it's called "The Spiral Word," a little more pedestrian, but maybe more user-friendly. But I'm a real poetry groupie. The poet who really inspired the Stanford murals, and whose voice forms the subtext of those murals, is Eduardo

Galeano, and his book, *The Open Veins of Latin America*, (*Las Venas Abiertas de Latinoamérica*) and *World Upside Down* (*Patas Arriba La Escuela Del Mundo Al Revés,*) both books by Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano. So yes, Magical Realism.

But even that term is so dated, like something from the 80s, so I've lost my affinity for that term as well. I've just been dealing with a life-threatening disease, so I'm hoping I have the opportunity to develop in the next direction, where I'd like to go in my work, which would really be more sculptural, more connected to urban planning, relief work that's more monumental, more integrated into the urban plan and construction, like a green, humanizing urban plan. I probably won't be doing a lot more fabrication of monumental pieces, just because of my own physical limitations, and probably just a lot more designing of those things, and sending them out to be fabricated. Or, making models, which is what I'm about now.

So yeah, I don't really like the categories that much, you know "Women's Art" calls up some stereotypes that make me uneasy and don't apply to me, or to all women. It now feels so '70's, like, does it <u>have</u> to be textiles or involve genitalia? You know the women's art category was deadly for a while, and it's so wrong. I mean I'm very proud to be a woman artist, but it's just so limiting in terms of how the audience and the art world define us, to be called by that nomenclature.

> AC - Your most recent project is a mural installed in the Centro Chicano at Stanford, which is based in part on Latin American literature such as the writings of Eduardo Galeano and the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, and features the images of Mayan scribes. Can you elaborate on the collaborative nature of the design process, especially the survey you distributed to Stanford students, and their responses? How carefully should the artist listen to the community?

JA – The greatest part of the collaboration was the students. They gave me a list of images, quotations, books, and ideas. I enjoyed meeting face to face with them – we had one really critical meeting where there were some alumni, and staff, and students, and the students talked about the fact that they didn't want a "Chicano" mural, that the word Chicano was even passé for them; that their generation, the current generation, of Latina/Latino people really see themselves as much more racially diverse, not just like *La*

Raza, or Chicanos, they really wanted to be seen as multi-ethnic, as African, European, Indigenous, Latino, Asian, the whole mix that we are here in California, and we're becoming more in other parts of the world. So they were quite emphatic about that.

They were also clear that they wanted to have a historical and a contemporary perspective, but they wanted some vision of the future, which is pretty daunting, really. *¿Que sé yo?,* what do *I* know what the future is going to be? Some of the visions of the future that Orozco painted and that I really feel are impending, are not good. So I really wrestled with that part of it, but I ended up having an image of the Mayan scribe writing back from the future, in a re-forested, mycelium-mushroom-cleaned-up environment – a positive vision. I mean you cannot just leave people with this absolute vision of destruction, when we're trying to get them to become the leaders of another vision. Not that I can't leave that in some sites and in some contexts, but it's not what I try to do with my students. I have taught at Stanford, on many occasions, and usually my classes have just about every Latino on the campus, which have numbered around fifty. Maybe there are more now (laughs), but they are not well represented there. I mean I've seen students on the edge of suicide, going to Stanford, the pressure, the pressure to do right, to represent your people, and that kind of thing is just crazy making, and it's a very competitive place. So I really wanted the mural to express a different, hopeful image of what is possible, and of their own identity, and the students were clear that they wanted the same.

In terms of the survey, most of the books they put on the survey I had already read, it wasn't something new or revelatory in most cases. I appreciated knowing what they were familiar with, but the one book that kept coming up, and it must have been assigned somewhere, for so many of them, was a book by Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. And I read that book, and also his *This is How You Lose Her*, and I want to read more of Junot Díaz. He's a wonderful writer, and I loved it, and that really impacted me. I mean I had so many quotes, that I didn't include, that I wanted to put in the mural, and actually I had a quote by Eduardo Galeano, from *Mundo Patas Arriba* that I was going to put in the frieze area of the cactus, but I had some difficulties with the

administration at Stanford, and they wouldn't pay my final payment until after I got the permission from Galeano's editors. I was going to need to extend the time to receive permission, so that meant that, although the mural was completed, Stanford would withhold my pay until the quote was lettered into the frieze, and I had a child to help put through college, so I couldn't wait. For this reason, the Galeano quote never got put into the space I designed it for. That being said, his inspiration goes throughout all of the imagery, and the *Popol Vuh* as well.

I really have to credit my husband, Tirso Araiza, for having had such a strong role in so many of the pieces I've made in the last ten years. We have a history of working together for thirty years, but really, the dialogues that we have about ideas, often push my work to another level, and our relationship is an intellectual and imaginative treasure. He was working on a book while I was designing this, and has almost finished it. It will be trilingual, in English, Spanish, and Maya, and called *La Ixtabay*, which in some ways related to the *Llorona* story, but it's from the Yucatán. It's a traditional story, but he's re-written it from the perspective of a political cartoonist, feminist, ecologist, defender of *Pachamama*.[209] It's tongue in cheek and full of irony. It's wonderful. It's the narrative for a graphic novel that we're gong to illustrate together. And one of the scenes form that book that he's writing, I also put into the first panel of the codex of the Stanford mural.

And also, the first proposal that I had for Stanford was inspired by our dialogue: to do a bas-relief, either a ceramic or cement piece, on the outside of the Centro Chicano, on a big arch on the right side of that façade. My idea was to sculpt a huge nopal cactus, like I painted on the ceiling. But his idea was to put quotes from literature on each one of the *pencas*, or the *ojas*, the leaves, of the cactus, which was a brilliant idea. When I re-designed for the interior, because the Centro couldn't get permission for me to do anything on the exterior, I placed the nopal cactus on the ceiling. I was going to put quotes from literature on that, but the painting itself just took a different direction, and I ended up not putting any quotes from any literature on the mural, although I had collected

[209] There are many versions of the origin of Pachamama, but today she is seen as the Earth Goddess, Mother Earth, or simply nature.

so many of them, from Junot Díaz, from Isabel Allende, from Don Quixote, from lots of places, but I just didn't use any of them. Sandra Cisneros, Juan Filipe Hererra, I had pages and pages of the quotes that inspired that mural, but none of them are there, it's all in the imagery.

The survey wasn't a big deal. What to me was the best part of that collaboration was working with Edgardo Cervano-Soto – it wasn't about the survey so much – Edgardo responded to the survey. He was one of the undergraduate Stanford students who was about to graduate, and a videographer, filmmaker, and writer. He volunteered to make a video of the process, which was wonderful. He also took my class one semester, at Berkeley City College, when we were doing the Realm mural. He then went on to work for the Mission Cultural Center and become an independent videographer. You can check him out online; he's wonderful. The Centro Chicano website posted a couple of the videos that he made, and he was this precious connection, collaboration – one of the richest parts of that collaboration was working with Edgardo. And then, when we were installing the mural, there were students who were really really helpful, bringing over extension cords, and boom boxes and food. They helped Tirso hold the codex up while the wallpaper paste was quickly drying, and that kind of stuff. Students just dropped in, and it was great to be in the Centro while I was installing the mural – the students were all so beautiful and inspiring, and then there was one young lady – I can get you her name later – who read these amazing poems that she'd written about the mural at the inauguration. She was fantastically talented. It's always a joy to be around those students, and Stanford, which has this rarified air, and like I said, it's really hard for Latino students to get through that place, to be with those students, there's just something really phenomenal about being there.

AC - Your website includes very detailed descriptions of the iconography of the Centro Chicano mural; can you further discuss the imagery in the section you call "Warrior Twins in a World Out of Balance," and "The Future" in terms of our current environmental crises?

JA – Yeah, of course that's of great concern to me. "The Warrior Twins," well that

whole section comes straight from the *Popol Vuh*, and the twin brothers that go the Underworld, Xibalbá, to fight its god, and bring back corn to save humanity. Their names are Ixbalanque and Hunapu, the brothers, and I have a scene that contrasts a pair of contemporary twins with the figures from the frescos at Bonampak. In that scene of the two modern brothers, one is a *Mara Salvatrucha*, a gangbanger, and the other is the visionary, a Dreamer, like a Stanford student – not the model student so much, it doesn't need to be that – but just somebody who is taking care of themselves and his family and his community, and his world. The gang image brother, he's got tattoos all over him – images of the drug wars, and addiction, and the *maquiladoras*, and the border, and all the things that people go through on a daily basis just to survive, to get in and out of this country, and to make a living, and all that kind of thing. The other brother has more visionary images tattooed on his body: images of balance, images of vision, and self-care and care for nature, and that kind of thing. Behind them – they're in the foreground, in the middle ground lie the Bonampak images, and in the extreme background, the third layer, sort of the street layer, contains images of destruction of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with the wars in Central and South America, and the dictators, from Rios Mont to Pinochet, to Videla and Reagan, and the drones falling, with the great singer-activist Mercedes Sosa being the counter-balance for all of that destruction. But then, after the drones, we have a scene of Fukushima and the tidal wave, and the icebergs melting in the background, and all of this environmental and social destruction happening.

The last panel, of the future, is the image of the Mayan scribe – who we see on her own wall where she is writing the beginning of the codes on the left side if we're reading from left to right, which we generally do in the west – and on the far right in the codex she's writing back to history, she's writing back from the future. She's got the glyphs coming out of her pen: the spiral word, or Ehecatl, which is the East Wind, or wisdom in the *Mexica* tradition. She's writing back from a saved world, a re-forested cleaner existence, and she's got the scribe tattoo on her wrist, and still has got the essence of all the earlier scribes, but she's a different iteration of that same person, several centuries,

fast forward. She is surrounded by a redwood forest, with the mycelium mushrooms reclaiming the toxic waste dumps and is grounded in a more balanced world.

> AC - Weren't the Mayan scribes traditionally male? Why did you choose a female to represent the scribe? Why is she partially nude – do you worry that this image will be sexualized by those who view her? The Mayan murals at Bonampak feature captives that are naked, stripping them of their identity in order to humiliate them – why depict a figure as honored as a scribe as nude? What are the "tattoos" on her body – what do they represent?

JA – OK, well there were female scribes in the Mayan tradition, I didn't make that up, and I chose that because I'm an advocate for women's voices. There are a lot of male figures in the images of the Codex too, and I do believe in balance of the masculine and feminine qualities in all of us. I love men as well, but the female voice has been silenced by men in literature in the west, and probably in many other parts of the world. That wonderful essay by Jane Smiley, *Can Mothers Think?*[210] makes the case quite clearly. Really, she points out, before Virginia Woolf, all published writers were men, and they were the sons, or brothers, or husbands of women, women (she's really talking about mothers) did not write, mothers were not published – if they wrote they were not published. Really the whole construction of a woman writer and a woman who has a voice, and a woman who can tell her own history or *herstory* – it's important – we can see how quickly the clock gets turned back in any country where a patriarchy reasserts itself. It doesn't take but a minute, really, just look at Iraq, or Iran, or the United States, and the Tea Party movement, pushing women back into those roles, and all that

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210 "The failure of literature to include mothers also means that potential mothers, girls in adolescence who are often avid readers, have no variety in their models of mothering, and no model for articulating what it means to be a mother. Thus it is more likely that these girls will internalize those externally formulated projections of motherhood they find in their culture and discover, to their disappointment and frustration, that their "performance" as mothers is almost inevitably wanting. Such views are likely to be reinforced by the husband/father, who himself has no reality-based understanding of motherhood."
Jane Smiley, "Can Mothers Think?" in *The True Subject: Writers on Life and Craft*, ed. Kurt Brown. (Saint Paul: Graywolf Press,1993), 13.

fundamentalism in many forms – Hitler, on and on, "*kinder, küche, kirche*" – it's not hard, not hard, to revert. So I think it's important to celebrate the voice of women, and the woman writing the codex in the Mayan scribe panel.

Nudity? I didn't really think about it too much – it's sort of my heritage, both in western art and in Mexican art, there's plenty of nudity in Pre-Columbian art, a lot of people are decorated and tattooed – look at Rivera's murals in the Palacio Nacional, we have the tattooed women doing the trades in the market place, they're partially nude. I employ the nude when I can, because the human body is so beautiful, and if you're looking at tattoos, why drape that? Her tattoos really represent my conversation with the students, because they wanted African, they wanted Samoan. I have an Egyptian lotus on her chest, I have Mayan, Aztec, Mapuche symbols from Chile and Argentina, there are four direction images from the Incas. I mean she's got like massive international wallpaper (laughs) and there's a Mayan scribe glyph, a woman scribe on her arm. I thought it was really important to use the language of the body to communicate all of that.

You know, people are going to defame whatever they want to defame, and I'm not going to try to control that. When we did the Women's Building mural, the pregnant woman at the top is nude, with the female fetus inside of her. We put that way at the top so nobody could graffiti it, so she could remain sacred and beautiful, and not sexualized, or defamed. The Mayan scribe, she's right at marker height, but she is at Stanford, and she is in sort of a sacred place (El Centro Chicano), and I think she's in a place that the students will protect and respect. You sort of have to give your work to the world and say "here, do what you will with it". Besides that, I have a digital scan, and could print out another on in about ten minutes, so if you mess with it, I'll just put a new one up. (laughs).

AC - You created a painting recently called *Spill/Derrame*, that was a response to the BP Gulf oil spill. What are some of the environmental and social justice issues that your *work is addressing now?*

JA – Actually I'm about to take that same image and incorporate it into a mural design that started off that's called "Welcome to Richmond" because I have this sketch for this drawing of a large street piece that I want to do this year, if I can. I got a grant from ACTA, the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, to work with my student and colleague Cece Carpio, and I want to do a street piece with Cece. I'd like this imagery to be a part of it. Cece might participate in some other aspects of the design, or we might do another design that's hers, or a collaborative one, but anyway, I plan to use the *Spill* image, in combination with another image of a mermaid skeleton, that I did as a mono-print, screen print, and finally combined with a drawing of the Richmond fire, with all the toxic clouds over Richmond. I want to collage those three images, into looking from sea to landscape, just about the contaminated environment that we live in. This is my environment, my neighborhood. This is the environment that affects us all, David (her nephew, age eleven, present during the interview) had lead poisoning when he was a baby, and it might have contributed to my cancer, who knows. We live in a very toxic environment in this western East Bay corridor (West Berkeley, between San Pablo & Highway 880). After the Second World War, the naval shipyard in Richmond "gifted" all this green paint to these houses, and everybody's houses were painted with this paint, and it's full of lead. And it's leached into the soil, it's all over the place, and we had to do a major lead cleanup here. My nephew lives a few blocks away, and they had to clean up all the lead in their house, and had to deal with diet stuff, and it's just, it's crazy over here. We've got Chevron polluting this whole area, and we have American Steel over here and it's been a big struggle for decades to get them to control their emissions in this neighborhood – I don't know what Bayer is doing, in terms of pollution, but you know, we're in a semi-industrial zone, and we're down-wind from a lot of pollution, and it has health impacts on our community. In my work, I'm not just talking about West Berkeley, I'm talking about Nigeria, I'm talking about the Congo, about the Amazon and everywhere that the petroleum industry has turned paradise into cancer zones.

The Congo is one of the worst sites on the planet, where Eve Ensler is doing this amazing work with the City of Joy. The Congo is getting ripped off for all this mineral

wealth so we can have our computers, and cell phones, and people are getting terribly exploited, you know horrible things are happening there; the Yellow River, the Nile, everything is getting terribly abused, nature is getting terribly abused. At the same time there is a rising green movement, and there are a lot of young people with a lot of great ideas, and there's a lot of hope out there too.

The *Derrame* image, the *Spill* image, is pretty depressing, I will admit. Tirso is a political cartoonist, and often just uses satire – look at his own print (on the wall in their home), that's such an awful image (laughs), but he's like "Not too much hope in that", and yeah, that's true, but sometimes you just have to wake people up, shake people up a little bit, so that's what that image is.

AC - You have also collaborated with other artists, notably on *Maestrapeace* for the Women's Building in San Francisco. Can you discuss that project and its collaborative process?

JA – Oh man! (laughs) Yeah, I don't know if I can answer it in the time we have here, I mean it's one of the most significant projects I've ever been involved in. There were seven women, we were an arranged marriage. There was a competition, a call for artists, and a lot of us didn't know each other when we started, and now its twenty years later, and we're like family. We've worked on that wall for years – we worked on it in 1993, it was finished in '95, it was graffitied and defaced after the first Gulf War, and we restored it in 2000. It was after 911, someone spray-painted the whole first floor with black spray paint, horrible stuff, and we restored that in 2000. We did the extension and the interior up to the second floor in 2010, I think, and then this last fall, we restored the whole exterior. So we've done a lot of projects together on that same wall; we're still trying to get a book written about it, within our lifetimes. We can't get a publisher, Alice Walker, Devora Major, the Poet Laureate of San Francisco, Jenny Lin, Adrienne Rich, may she rest in peace, all these women have offered to write about it. Pomegranate Press, Chronicle books won't, none of these will publish it, I don't know if it's because it's mostly women of color that did the project, or what the problem is, but we can't get a

book project together, we're still working on that. But you know it was like, somebody said when they put us all together that we had over a hundred years of mural painting experience between us, and they wanted us to do part of a wall on the 18th Street side, that's about 15 by 20 feet, and we were like "Are you kidding me?" So we designed the whole building, and surprised them, and surprised the community. And of course we did paint the whole exterior of the building, and some of the interior.

The City of San Francisco, we don't know what happened, but the funding was withheld when we first started the project, because it was either the city or state or national landmarks board didn't want us to do the design we proposed, and they threatened to cut all the funding for all murals in San Francisco if they let our project go forward, and we tried to work with Art Agnos,[211] and lots of different politicos, and we won when the San Francisco Chronicle published images of us sitting on the scaffolding, with no painting going on, in front of the wall, and got a front page story, and that's how we won our struggle.

The first phase of painting the mural, the two murals, at Lapidge and Eighteenth Streets, I did that in the first 18 months, my daughter was three years old when we started the project, and she was climbing the scaffolding by the time we finished. Five stories high, lots of physical labor, and we worked out a very beautiful relationship in the process. We designed it all together, there was no one lead artist, we were all equals in the process, as you can easily see online, that was myself, Miranda Bergman, Edith Boone, Susan Kelk Cervantes, Meera Desai, Yvonne Littleton, and Irene Perez, and then the woman who did all the calligraphy, for free, is Olivia Cerrano who lives here in Berkeley. We made about two dollars an hour on that project, it was really underpaid, and very hard work, but certainly one of the most fulfilling pieces that I've ever done. So that's that in a nutshell.

[211] Former mayor of San Francisco.

INTERVIEW PART TWO, JUNE 18, 2013

AC - Can you speak about why you create public art - what are the pros and cons?

JA – The pros are that my work is accessible to a lot of people, they don't have to pay for it. They do have to pay for using my imagery, I'm not all about public domain, or free use of my images, unless I specifically give people permission. There is a lot of exploitation of artists that way, but I do definitely make work for the public square. I think we're losing the public square, the whole notion of a democracy, we don't have one right now. Everything is getting more and more privatized, we see movements all over the world where people are trying to reclaim the public square in different ways, and I think public art has a great role to play in that, and not as an add-on, but as, I mean sometimes it has to be a response to the way the public square has been designed away from the *vox populi*. I think whether it's a guerrilla street piece, or a legal piece, I think taking back the streets with our art is a good thing to do.

The cons of making public art are of course the bureaucracy, and the exhausting processes that artists have to go through to get a legal piece up, and to maintain it, and so much of the burden, and responsibility, and liability is on the artist, when you work with public institutions, I think almost too much, and it makes some public commissions almost untenable. I've been doing that for years, and I have to say, I'm sort of exhausted by all of that, and almost want to do more illegal stuff, because I'm sort of tired of having to kiss too many people's asses, and having to – I don't mind, I love working with the community, but it's the more bureaucratic end of things that's very tiring, jumping through lots of administrative hoops, the administrative side of it. Most of that falls to the artist, unless you're very, very wealthy and can afford a big team of people helping you.

AC - Who is the primary audience for your public art? Can you talk about who you create the work for, in specific instances (i.e. Stanford, the Women's building, etc.) and how much knowledge does the random viewer on the street need to decode the symbolism, or imagery encoded in the work?

JA- Well I think my audience is everybody. I'm not trying to speak specifically to only one group of people. I'm hoping that it's as universal as it can be, given that they are site-specific pieces. I am designing for an inner circle of people who have a stake in those spaces, an immediate stake in those spaces, and who have ownership over those spaces, and have needs to be met with the artwork. For example at Stanford, I spoke with the alumni and current students, and the administration and the Centro Chicano, and anybody who was involved in that space. And I listened to them, and took direction and leadership from them to a certain degree, and then I did precisely what I wanted to do, and I think I did that in a respectful way, so that they could have their voices expressed through my work. There the needs were for the center to be welcoming to people of all Latino/indigenous groups, that it would be supportive of the students, that it speak about history and our current times and the future, a tall order, and that it be supportive and inspiring to the students. And so I worked with them on issues of literature and got a lot of feedback as I think I mentioned previously.

As far as the Women's building was concerned, myself and a team of another six women worked with the women's community as organized by the Women's building which was a massively large group of women who had been involved with the center for years, and lived in the neighborhood, lived in San Francisco and the East Bay, Max Dashu, she had an amazing archive of art-historical images, an historical archive that she opened to us, which was wonderful. I guess we were serving the feminine spirit in the world, whether that be in men, or in women, or in the Earth itself, that was our community, that's how I see it anyway, and that's a pretty wide community. I think at each site people are going to self-select who the community is. The Women's Building and many other pieces that I've done were done before there was an online community, and now with Facebook, and public media, and online communication, the audience is just vast – and I get images and beautiful inspirational pieces from people all over the world, and people respond to me from all over the world. It's just thrilling, actually, to see how big the audience is, far beyond what I'd originally conceived in many cases. I don't even think about too much of the specificity of the audience, because I know

through digital communication it's going to get to places I can't even imagine.

> AC - Given that the Hispanic population of California is projected to be equal to that of the white non-Hispanic population by July of 2013, and then out grow it, how does your art and your teaching address a soon to be majority population who are still in some ways perceived as outsiders?

JA – I think that's how we started, that's how I started, as outsiders, I never thought of us as on the inside, and I don't think I'm there now - I have no real desire to be there in terms of who the inside is at this point. I do think that *Latin@s* in California and in this country want, we really want, the same rights an privileges as any citizen, and we don't have those yet, particularly people who are undocumented and working in service industries, which is the majority of our population; underpaid and overworked, and don't have adequate healthcare, or education, or housing, and so we've got a long way to go even though we're becoming the majority. The sleeping giant is definitely waking up; we saw that in the presidential elections, we see that now.

I was at a party in Southern California a long time ago, when I had just finished the *Lechugueras* mural, and I was showing somebody my portfolio there, and she said "Yeah your job is," she was another Latina, "your job is really to tell the story of our people," and I agree with Isabel Allende, who said "I'm here as a witness to history," and I think that's really important, just to sort of tell what's going on, and not setting out to say I'm the official historian, or that my version is the correct version, or anything like that, but to bear witness, because as we know, history books are written by the victors, and we haven't been the victors, yet. And hopefully the victor idea is going out the door, I think victories of social justice are good, but I don't think we want to be engaged in that winner or loser mentality much longer on this planet, because it's just killing it. I do think that being a witness to history is very important, and that's how I see the work that I do in some ways.

And then some days I'm just like the hell with that, it's not that I don't want that, it's that, it's not a self-conscious thing all the time, like "I'm going to go out and witness history," it's more like I'm channeling what I'm going through and what my society is

going through in a very specific way, which may or may not be relevant to many people, they may not think this is an important thing to witness. I have to be selective about what I choose to spend my time on. Alice Walker has a new book out called *The Cushion in the Road, Meditation and Wandering as the Whole World Awakens to Being in Harm's Way*, about the tension between, I haven't read it yet, this is what she said, I'm paraphrasing it, something about the tension between the still, meditative life, and the life of the activist writer – being called to social justice, and at the same time being called to a spiritual path. I definitely feel that tension myself, the work addresses both things, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes separately, and sometimes the artist just wants some space to herself to say "I'm just going to do what I feel like right now, and see where that goes." And just be intuitional, and just be unintentional in some ways, and that often is a big opening for something that's important to do.

> AC - What defines you as an activist? What led you to become an activist artist? How have your political concerns changed over the course of your career, and how are they reflected in the subject matter of your work?

JA – I think I was lead to become a political artist, or activist artist, because I came of age in a very activist time and place, with an activist mother, and activist influences around me, a sense of urgency about the need to have social and economic justice, for every one. It was Detroit, in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the Women's Movement. And as I mentioned earlier, I grew up in the midst of Diego Rivera's murals, at the Detroit Art Institute, and, it was just sort of the air we breathed at the time – it's never gone away, all those movements have evolved, and many more have joined the fray, or were already in the fray, that I just wasn't aware of when I was in my teens. Really, there was such a coming of age around issues of the Black Panthers, strongly influenced by Gil Scott Heron, "Winter in America," "The Revolution Will Not be Televised," So much literature; Amiri Baraka, Diane DiPrima, the New York Beat poets, and the revolutionary poetry movement that grew out of that, and the literature, the music – there was amazing music in Detroit, Motown was blowing

up when I was growing up, activism was just sort of the beat of what was going on. And of course, getting recruited into the Farmworkers Movement out here in California was really significant, and things just kept going. I mean I was just completely immersed in, and felt excited by, inspired by all of the examples of people who were struggling for, and having victories in terms of winning rights around labor, and gender equality, and racial equality – not that any of those things have been won yet. There have been some wonderful examples of leadership and victories.

My political concerns have only grown, in terms of moving from a more nationalist to a more internationalist consciousness, and global consciousness, thinking beyond a specific group of peoples rights – and traveling to Nicaragua, and Cuba, and different parts of the world has also made me more aware of how things are framed differently in different places. In my work, I think I've always been concerned about the environment, having been exposed to pesticides very early in terms of the Farmworkers Movement, and working in the fields, and I think it's had its health impacts on my life, and on everybody's life around me. It's not like, why me? It's more like why not? Everybody, we're immersed in this toxic stew, and of course the environmental issues are getting more and more extreme. We are facing an impending, really doom, and I think people are not awake enough about that. I think my work has gotten more urgent about issues of environmental justice. We are going to run out of planet, as my son says, we have to become a lot more adaptable – the whole infrastructure, the economic and social infrastructure is going to have to change very quickly, in order for humanity to survive, and the rest of the species on the planet as well, in any kind of quality way. I think those are the big issues that are up front in my work, but they haven't superseded issues about labor, or gender, or sexuality, or race, because all of those things are completely interwoven. I think a sense of urgency just continues to build.

AC - What role do you think art should play in addressing the many problems the world is faced with today?

JA – I can't prescribe everybody's way of making art, I think that would be quite arrogant. I can only say how I feel about my own work, and the tradition I come out of,

which is social realist, magical realist, definitely from Ben Shan, Käthe Kollwitz, to the Mexican muralists, to Banksy, to all kinds of street art around the world. I think that the commitment to using a public venue to talk about issues of power is very important.

I think it's very hard to measure what art does to change the world, very hard, and I'm not really in the business of measuring that. I have sort of an internal feeling, or barometer, but I sort of know when I feel like I've hit the nail on the head when I'm working – I know when I'm lost, I know when I'm getting there. I think that everybody has an important role to play. Everybody has got to figure out whether their embroidery, or their way of chanting, or their music, or whatever they do, is actually going to improve the quality of their lives and everyone else's, or not. I'm not a big believer in art for art's sake, as it is, or art as simply a decorative form to soothe an elite class of people. But I do think that decoration is very important, I'm not anti-decorative, as some of my beloved colleagues are, I do think that women, and different indigenous groups, and different cultural traditions have a beautiful way of, lots of traditions of making things that are decorative and also practical and soul-feeding. So I think there is a place for the decorative that is very important in terms of evolving our own aesthetics that inspire, calm, sooth, repulse, invoke, whatever we need to do in creating an art aesthetic – I'm not anti-beautiful, but I am repelled by the consumptive and, frivolous, and like I said, art for art's sake decorative, that the art world reserves for the rich. I find that very repulsive. And for that reason, I haven't had a very food gallery or museum life. I think because of the games that need to be played, with one's own imagery, to be embraced by those cultural institutions. However, there are a few exceptions to be made, and I would like to be in those places, because I think I should be, for a lot of people to see, and museums play a very important role of preserving history, not all museums - the whole notion of the museum is changing. But I don't think the gallery world is populist oriented at all, so there's a certain tension there for me.

APPENDIX B

MAQUILADORAS AND FEMICIDE

Maquiladoras are manufacturing plants in free-trade zones, in Mexico and other Central American countries, with many of those in Mexico located near the border with the United States. Because of NAFTA, tariffs are low, benefiting the foreign corporations that own the *maquiladoras*. This has exacerbated the poor working conditions of the workers who often work long hours for low wages. (The average monthly wage for production workers in Juarez was $422 a month in December of 2014.)[212] The most notorious *maquiladoras* are in Ciudad Juarez, a city that, as discussed in Chapter One, has had a huge problem with the unsolved femicides of *maquiladora* workers and other vulnerable young women, most from impoverished backgrounds. Precise statistics are unavailable, but according to Dr. Julia Monarrez Fragoso, "a researcher from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte who's done groundbreaking studies on the women's murders, [is cited] as the source for a tally of 1,437 women murdered in Ciudad Juarez between January 21, 1993 and March 8, 2013."[213] These murders are largely unsolved, and their causes are unclear but are probably connected to gang violence, sexual assault, and jealousy induced vengeance. It seems obvious in any case that women's lives are not valued and their bodies are viewed as disposable. "According to Lagarde y de los Rios [a prominent Mexican feminist and former

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[212] Alana Semuels, "Upheaval in the Factories of Juarez," *The Atlantic*, January 21, 2016. Accessed March 18, 2016. http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/01/upheaval-in-the-factories-of-juarez/424893/

[213] Kent Patterson, "20 Years of Border Femicide," New Mexico State University, Frontera NorteSur, July 9, 2013, accessed March 18, 2016. https://fnsnews.nmsu.edu/20-years-of-border-femicide/

Congresswoman]: 'Feminicide is genocide against women, and it occurs when the historical conditions generate social practices that allow for violent attempts against the integrity, health, liberties and lives of girls and women.'"[214]

[214] Ibid.

APPENDIX C

DICTATORS, REAGAN, AND CENTRAL AMERICAN WARS

EfraÍn Ríos Montt was a Guatemalan general who became president through a coup in 1973. His brutal military regime received support from the U. S. government, and committed human rights abuses, including massacres, against the indigenous population. Indicted for genocide and crimes against humanity, his conviction was annulled.

> The country's top court has overturned the genocide conviction of former U.S.-backed military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. In a historic verdict earlier this month, Ríos Montt was sentenced to 80 years for genocide and crimes against humanity in the killings of more than 1,700 Ixil Mayan people in the early 1980s. But now the status of the verdict is in question. In a three-to-two ruling Monday, the Guatemalan constitutional court dismissed all the case's proceedings dating back to a month ago. It was then that the court first annulled the case amidst a dispute between judges over jurisdiction.[215]

Augusto Pinochet was the leader of the military junta that overthrew the socialist government of Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973. During the coup the presidential palace was stormed by Pinochet's troops and Allende allegedly committed suicide.[216] Pinochet's military dictatorship arrested over130,000 people, many of whom were tortured, and at least 3200 were executed or "disappeared." One of the most famous of these people was Victor Jara, a songwriter and theater director, who was tortured and killed in a stadium used as a detention center. In a historical precedent in which several

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[215] "Ríos MonttGenocide Verdict Annulled, But Activists Ensure US-Backed Crimes Will Never Be Forgotten," *Democracy Now*, May 23, 2013, accessed March 19, 2016. http://www.democracynow.org/2013/5/23/ros_montt_genocide_verdict_annulled_but

[216] Allende's death was ruled as suicide after 37 years of speculation when his body was exhumed in 2011 and examined by a team of Chilean and international forensic experts. Others still doubt that Allende was not killed by Pinochet's troops. Alexei Barrionuevo and Pascale Bonnefoy, "Allende's Death Was a Suicide, an Autopsy Concludes", *The New York Times*, July 19, 2011, accessed April 4, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/20/world/americas/20allende.html?ref=salvadorallende

European judges applied the principal of "universal jurisdiction," Pinochet was indicted on human rights violations by a Spanish judge, arrested in London, and extradited to Chile, but ultimately died before he was convicted of any crimes.[217]

Ronald Reagan was president of the United States from 1981 To 1989, when, according to Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan;

> The United States was heavily involved in wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s in what Reagan described as an effort to stem Soviet influence in the hemisphere. The United States spent more than $4 billion on economic and military aid during El Salvador's civil war, in which more than 75,000 people were killed, many of them civilians caught in the crossfire.
>
> The United States also organized Nicaragua's contra guerrillas, who fought that country's revolutionary Sandinista government. Reagan referred to contras as "the moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers" and the United States spent $1 billion on them; the fighting in Nicaragua killed as many as 50,000 people. Honduras was a staging ground for U.S. Nicaraguan operations. Reagan also supported the repressive military dictatorship of Guatemala, where more than 200,000 people, mostly indigenous peasants, died over 36 years of civil strife.[218]

[217] Jonathan Kandell, "Augusto Pinochet, Dictator Who Ruled by Terror in Chile, Dies at 91." *The New York Times*, 11 December, 2006, accessed April 4, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/11/world/americas/11pinochet.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[218] Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan, "In Central America, Reagan Remains a Polarizing Figure," *The Washington Pos*t, June 10, 2004, accessed September 27, 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A29546-2004Jun9.html

APPENDIX D

MARA SALVATRUCHA

The Mara Salvatrucha is a gang that is infamous for their brutality and their facial tattoos. Formed in Los Angeles in the 1980s by young Salvadoran immigrants whose families were fleeing the civil war in El Salvador, the Mara Salvatrucha or MS-13, have a reputation for being particularly violent, partly because some of the founding members had wartime experience as guerilla fighters. The history of MS-13 is tragic and complex; the El Salvadoran military was backed by the United States government, but ironically many Salvadoran people sought refuge from the conflict in the United States. After the Mara Salvatrucha formed,

> The United States government began a program of deportation of foreign-born residents convicted of a wide range of crimes. This enhanced deportation policy, in turn, vastly increased the number of gang members being sent home to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and elsewhere. According to one estimate, 20,000 criminals returned to Central American between 2000 and 2004. The convicts, who often had only the scarcest connection to their countries of birth, had little chance of integrating into the legitimate society. They often turned to what they knew best: gang life.
>
> In this way the decision to use immigration policy as an anti-gang tool spawned the virulent growth of the gang in the Northern Triangle: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Numbers vary but the U.S. Southern Command says there are as many as 70,000 gang members in the Northern Triangle. The proliferation of gangs has accompanied a spike in murder rates. The area has the highest homicide rate in the world of a region not at war.[219]

[219] From the website InSight Crime, Organized Crime in the Americas, partly sponsored by American University's Center for Latin American and Latino Studies. "MS 13," *insightcrime.org*, accessed 2/21/2016. http://www.insightcrime.org/groups-el-salvador/mara-salvatrucha-ms-13

APPENDIX E

1984: BLUEFIELDS
By Eduardo Galeano

Deep root, lofty trunk, dense foliage: from the center of the world rises a thorn-less tree, one of those trees that know how to give themselves to the birds. Around the tree whirl the dancing couples, navel to navel, undulating to a music that wakens stones and sets fire to ice. As they dance, they dress and undress the tree with streaming ribbons of every color. On this tormented, continuously invaded, continuously bombarded coast of Nicaragua[220], the Maypole fiesta is celebrated as usual.

The tree of life knows that, whatever happens, the warm music spinning around it will never stop. However much death may come, however much blood may flow, the music will dance men and women as long as the air breathes them and the land plows and loves them.[221]

[220] Today, however, the forests along the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua are being felled at a shocking rate by colonists from the Pacific side. The Bosawás Biosphere Reserve, supposedly protected, loses 30,000 hectares of forest every year; illegal settlers have clear-cut and burnt the forest for cattle, logging, mining, and for monoculture such as palm oil plantations. The indigenous and Afro-Caribbean peoples who historically have lived there, have been overwhelmed and have lost rights to their own lands, and the Mayangna and Miskito peoples have threatened to go to war. Bloodshed has already ensued, threatening to hurl Nicaragua back into civil strife and chaos.
Matt McGrath, "Nicaragua cloud forest 'under siege' by illegal loggers," *BBC News*. May 3, 2013, accessed February 2, 2106. http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-22379788

[221] Eduardo Galeano, *Century of the Wind: Memory of Fire, Volume 3.* (New York: Nation Books, 2010.) 278.

APPENDIX F

THE UNITED STATES ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

The United States Alliance for Progress was a $20 billion aid program started under President Kennedy in 1961. Loosely based on the Marshall Plan, it was meant to bolster relations with Latin America, partly because of devolving relations with Cuba and fears that Communism would spread into Latin America. In an informative article in *Third World Quarterly*, Stephen Streeter writes that initially in Guatemala, aid to impoverished rural communities included "civic actions, literacy projects, rural leadership training, housing, and a Special Development Fund to finance the construction of schools, roads and wells in rural villages." These programs led to social unrest however, and the ruling classes we not happy; "although most of the effects of this nation-building activity would not be felt until the 1970s, ominous signs appeared in the 1960s of the violence that would soon engulf the popular movement. The Guatemalan oligarchy, which obviously did not support the Alliance for Progress, red-baited anyone working on behalf of social and economic reform." Ultimately the U. S. government supported the military because of fears that a popular uprising would lead to another Cuba. "As numerous declassified documents testify, it is doubtful that the internal security forces would have been capable of slaughtering the population on such a massive scale had it not been for US military equipment and training." Streeter concludes "the USA had contributed to both sides of that equation by promoting grassroots development while simultaneously organizing a counter-insurgency campaign that had killed more than 10,000 civilians by the end of the decade. Nation-building in Guatemala thus set the scene for the gruesome state-

sponsored genocidal campaign against the Maya that was to unfold in the 1970s."[222]

[222] Stephen Streeter, "Nation-building in the Land of Eternal Counter-insurgency: Guatemala and the Contradictions of the Alliance for Progress," in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2006, 57-68.